

THE LITERARY CRIMES OF J.C. WILLIAMSON



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OF

J.C. WILLIAMSON

Edited by Robert A. Williamson

A RAW Book

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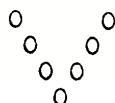
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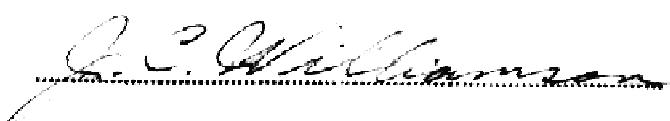
THE LITERARY CRIMES

O F

J. C. WILLIAMSON



For Irene

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "G. E. Williamson". The signature is written over a horizontal dashed line, with a solid line above it and a dotted line below it.

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FOREWORD



THE GETAWAY VEHICLE

Being an account of a Grand old gent
Who, in his youth did begin
An undertaking of ages spent
Hatching the plots within.

(It is presumptuous in the extreme
To introduce it in like style
But vanity aside, I deem
That it may have imparted a smile.)

But the volume of work he produced
And wryly ascribed to his fault,
In value has long been sadly reduced
By the fact that it stayed in his vault.

I thought one good Crime so inspired
Deserved another fine caper,
And this vehicle was all I really required
To supply the old Bandit with paper.

By now, you expect this to boast
Burglaries of poetry shops,
Ballpoint stick-ups and prosaic roasts,
All keeping a watch for the cops...

But in his self-styled Literary Crimes
(Which name is an irony by far)
“Misdeeds” are in fact great works sublime,
And I’m only driving the car.

Still, we share a regret for Grand sire –
Though it’s not a regret, per se –
But a wistful melancholic desire
To know him as we could today.

Alas, we have long bid adieu.
But these few treasures have been
Saved to permit a vicarious few
To infer something of his mien.



To this end I have gathered to hand
Such works as are still on the shelf,
And if all of this comes off as neatly as planned,
We'll relive some small part of himself.

Now, he had a poetic bent,
And for this he assigned the name –
But attached you will find some of other intent
Which are telling, in a way just the same.

So starting in rhyme and verse,
Through speeches, head tables regaled,
In humourous stories (some bad, some worse)
His wry weapon (a typewriter) fired tales.

For his was a wit without peer,
Though if praised, I imagine he'd scoff.
Still to us, it is all so perfectly clear;
Pop the clutch, turn the page, and we're off!

R.A. Williamson, 1999

CRIMES OF POETRY

These works have been reproduced as faithfully as possible based on his original manuscripts, including order of presentation, layout, punctuation, and all but a select few spelling errors (care is required in that regard, since spelling convention is often a reflection of the times, and intentional misspelling is also a favourite tool of his humour – I'd hate to “fix” a good joke).

For the most part, they date from the early 1920s, when he first conceived the theme, during his Normal and early teaching days. There are some notable exceptions however.



LITERARY CRIMES

Read on my friend, and you shall see
Some wondrous works of poetry.
The poet, as yet unknown to fame
Dreams that some day his noble name
Shall by the pushing of this pen
Become renowned among all men. -----

Be calm! My friend. Control yourself.
Don't laugh so hard you'll break the delf.
Think you this is the idle dream
Of some poor guy whose head did seem
Like to a belfry full of bats
Or upper floor o'errun with rats?

Before you judge, read on my friend.
Devour all right to the end.
And then you're free to criticize;
Dig in and tear up to your eyes;
And when you're through, come back to me.
I will compose a poem to thee.

April 11, 1921

THE FIRST CRIME

Long John and Lanky Jennie
Both of whom are very skinny
Went for a walk one day.
On the road she spied a toad
And her face grew wry as she did cry,
“Save me Johnny, Save me Johnny,
Save me and I’ll be yours.”

La Riviere High School, 1916

LET'S SMILE

When your course seems very rough
And you're feeling rather tough
Over some unlooked for cuff,
Do not say, "I've had enough."
But Smile.

Get right up and face your trouble
And go at it on the double
For perhaps 'tis just a bubble
That afar off looks like trouble
So Smile.

Wear a smile and buckle in
Land a knock out to the chin
Never mind your damaged shin
For your grit and pep will win.
Let's Smile.

November 19, 1920

SWAN SONG

Oh! Monday morning, dreadful day
When the exam begins;
The time is come when I must pay
For all my loafing sins.

Exams! I have enough of them
To make a fellow smother,
If I get through on one of them
They'll get me on another.

Oh happy days! they are all fled,
And worries now commence.
I'll scan the Press to see if I
Am on or over the fence.

Oh for the gift of Merlin!
Oh for the gift of blow!
To wring from out this empty head
The things that I should know.

June, 1920

DRIFTING

All the world goes drifting onward
Each one in his own canoe;
Friends drift off to lee and windward,
Others stay the long course through.

Some meet and go on together
And their courses blend as one,
Bound by bonds of deepest feeling
‘Til their earthly course is run.

Others cross, a hail in passing –
They are gone for ever more.
Gone, our interest in them also.
We drift on just as before.

Others touch, a moment linger;
All too soon they drift apart,
But a tie is left between them
Rooted deep within each heart.

Strongest tie of oldest standing,
Ever since the world began
‘Tis that tie whereby a woman
Makes a fool of mortal man.

February, 1921

MISTS

Here's a fable of the mists:

Pessimist and Optimist,
Persons you meet every day.
One looks glum; the other gay.

Pessi brings along the hearse:
All your gay plans he'll disperse.
If you've any cause to worry,
He'll increase it in a hurry.

Opto brings along a smile:
'Twill be better after while,
It is sure to be alright,
Just sleep on it overnight.

Which way would you rather be:
Dull and glum, or bright and free?
Yours the choice, and you must choose,
Will you scatter hope or blues?

November 19, 1921

Editor's note: I believe "Opto" here to be an intentional error, emphasizing antithesis rather than twin.

A FRIEND

Sunday morning once again
The teacher's day of rest.
The day they write their letters to
The friends they love the best.

So, since we both are teachers,
And since we two are friends,
Let's keep this correspondence
Going from both ends.

Write anything and everything
Whether old or new,
It all fulfils the purpose:
It recalls nice thoughts of you.

Of you, a normalite, a friend:
For such you are to me:
A friend I often think of,
A friend I'd like to see.

A friend, I said, Who is a friend?
But, one who in the mind
Arouses pleasure and good will
And thoughts 'tis good to find.

This little poem is long enough
But before I let it end,
I'll state my great desire,
"To be thought of as your friend."

March 13, 1921

ROBINVILLE

Three miles from Carnegie's clamour;
Three miles from the mighty roar,
Of the C.P.R.'s tri-weekly
As it races to Lenore;

Three miles from Carnegie's glitter,
On a gently sloping hill
Stands a little old red school house
Known to all as Robinville.

To the south and slightly eastward,
In the evening, see the glow.
'Tis the lights of Brandon city
Far across the fields of snow.

Less than half a mile to northward
On the G.T.P. main line,
Smoking monsters puff and whistle
As the rush on, to Levine.

On the same line more to westward
Whence comes wind with snow and shivers
In a wealthy farming district
Lies the thriving town of Rivers.

But to school from all directions
Come the Hudsons, Franks, and Hayes,
Robins, Eyres, Smiths, Madzuiks, Millers,
Nevill; all come on fine days.

Such the place where I'm located;
Such the scholars whom I teach;
Try to teach, to put it rightly,
Without using strap or beech.

If you could wish to see SOME teaching,
Come to see this gang of mine.
Take the C.P. to Carnegie,
Or the Grand Trunk to Levine.

February 16, 1921

EASTER

Sing a song a sixpence
And shout Hurrah for Easter;
The time I take the G.T.P.
The Grand Trunk going easter.

Going East? I'll say so!
Going to the convention
Going to see some other things
But they're too nice to mention.

March 18, 1921

MAIL SERVICE

Sure you ought to see Carnegie
Where the mail is handled quick:
See old Watts behind the counter,
Gosh all hemlock! makes me sick.

And that train: the old tri-weekly
Makeshift of the C.P.R.'s;
Oh, I'd like to get behind and ---
Kick the whole darned works to Mars.

April 20, 1921

OUR MAIL SERVICE

Would that I to you could tell it;
On a basis fair and square,
But I'm handicapped completely
For you know --- I never swear.

April 21, 1921

ALARM

I took the bell from off my bike,
And then came through my head
A brilliant use to make of it,
So now – ‘tis on my bed.

You wonder why I put it there?
Well, here’s the big idee:
I have it there to wake me up
‘Tis my alarm; d’you see?

All I do in the morning is
Reach out and ring the bell,
And then I know ‘tis get up time.
Some idee – Ain’t it swell?

So now I’ll be on time below
To clean my porridge plate;
I’ll always be an early bird.
This bike bell sure is great.

May 2, 1921

COMEDY

I've had a new experience.

By heck! but it was funny.

The little comedy was staged

Without expense or money.

The school room had been noisy

Much whispering was heard

So just as I dismissed them

I spoke the fatal word.

I gazed at the two culprits,

"I want to see you two."

You should have seen their faces;

They turned a sickly blue.

I stood in sober judgement

With my hand upon the drawer;

They crouched in attitudes of fear

I'd never seen before.

All in a deathlike silence

I pulled the drawer aside,

And rolled the strap about my hand

With no attempt to hide.

I spoke again, "Come in here."

They came as to their doom.

I followed them and closed the door

Of the little anteroom.

In there they cowered against the wall

With faces white and still,

I was the executioner

Preparing for the kill.

Their eyes were ever seeking

The strap and then my face.

The comedy it seemed to be

By tragedy displaced.



I stated their offences,
Excuses heeded not,
Their lower lips 'gan quiver –
Death is a dreadful lot.

At last when they were nearly dead
In mental tortures grip,
I said, "Perhaps I'll let you off."
And they prepared to skip.

I quenched at once that ray of hope,
"I don't believe I should."
They sank back with a dreadful groan,
"Oh please don't. I'll be good."

To me the situation
Was difficult the while,
I must maintain the atmosphere
And curb my wish to smile.

It really was quite funny
And also very sad
To play the fierce tormentor
And scare the kids so bad.

But finally, I let them go.
They passed in mortal fear
Lest I should change my mind again
And nab them by the ear.

So for a time I have them tamed;
But one look will suffice
To fill them with the dread of STRAP
And turn their hearts to ice.

April 28, 1921

(*"Aim to give the child experience."*
Dr. W.A. McIntyre)

A DREAM

Last night I had some dream; I'll say!
About my school across the way.
I dreamt that I, so sorely tried,
At last broke loose and so applied
My strap, with vigour, to the hide
Of one of my poor scholars.

Just as I finished, I did see
A mighty host regarding me,
With horror stricken, frightful eyes;
Inspector, Doctor, all those guys
Who always spring the big surprise
When they are least expected.

Before I could get o'er the shock,
The whole darned gang began to talk
About the evils in the ways
Of all the teachers in these days.
And sure for me there was no praise;
But censure! – Gosh all hemlock!

One big push of the teaching staff
Looked hard at me – I didn't laugh.
These were his words, so fierce, so true,
“Department now is watching you,
We keep strict tab on what you do.”
(“He's fainted! – Give him air.”)

April 16, 1921

MARY'S BEAU

I have a little fellow
Who goes round about with me.
I am the only girl around
That he goes out to see.

He has a covered cutter.
My, but it's nice inside,
Especially when he holds the robes
About me as we ride.

He only lives across the road.
It's nice with him so near.
And any time he's not at home,
You just bet he is here.

Almost every evening
Soon as his chores are done,
He washes up and hustles off
To visit neighbour Gunn.

We always chat so chummy like.
Was ever love like this?
One night – but I'll not tell you
What led to our first --ss.

He's a nice dark little fellow.
His laugh is just so fine;
I'm sure no man could equal
This little beau of mine.

What am I going to do with him?
The answer – time will tell;
But I 'most believe I'll keep him
'Cause I love him awful well.

I hope that we will never part.
I could not stand the loss,
Because there is no other beau
Like my own Russie Ross.

April 9, 1921

LOVE BIRDS

Clickety clack, bang, rattle,
Squeak, bump, roar;
Louie's car stops with a jolt
At Mr. Gunn's front door.

Louie yanks the 'emergency
And tumbles from the seat.
Mamie's there to meet him.
I say boys! Ain't she sweet?

Just one moment – draw the curtain –
Was it mushy? Maybe so.
But I can't get mush on paper
So will have to let that go.

My! but ain't she dolled up pretty?
She is sure some class – to spoon.
But aside – don't tell nobody –
She's been fixing up since noon.

Whatever she does all that time
Is still a mystery
But always she's fixed up JUST SO
When Louie comes at three.

He always comes on Sundays
Be it rain, hail, snow or shine.
I 'most believe I'd do the same
If such a girl were mine.

Just see those eyes of lovely brown;
Those teeth so pearly white;
That hair, her crowning glory;
Of these Louie dreams each night.

While Louie dreams of lovely eyes
Of soft, sweet, dreamy, brown;
Fair Mamie dreams of her true knight,
Who ne'er was known to frown.

Her tall goodnatured, loving, boy,
With eyes of truest blue.
I never saw a better match,
Or dreamed of one. Did you?



Unless it is the other pair
 Of love birds; Babe and Jack,
Whose love by very contrast makes
 All other loves look black.

And Babe herself, Oh baby!
 ‘Tis far beyond my pen;
I can’t describe this little girl
 Who steals the hearts of men.

Her lover’s perfectly enthralled.
 He walks nine miles or more.
So you can bet ‘tis something great
 He does that walking for.

He comes to Babe through storm or flood.
 She meets him at the door;
Her handsome little fellow
 With his classy pompadour.

To some, he may seem quite;
 But he just delights in fun.
He has the grit that makes things go;
 And what he starts – ‘tis done.

He has his car in summer time.
 One of those clever ones:
He just climbs in and dreams of Babe,
 And it takes him to Gunns.

And when he gets there – whew!
 I’m beat for words once more,
But, ‘tis a feast of love’s delights;
 I can’t describe it more.

So much for Louie’s sweetie;
 So much for Mamie’s beau;
They’re sure to go and do it.
 Do what? You ask. You know.

So much for little Baby
 And her nice little boy;
And in their partnership to come
 I wish them peace and joy.

#

Peace, perfect peace!
 Live thou in bliss divine.
Beware the life of Jiggs!
 Let not such peace be thine!

May 7, 1921

OUTCASTS

Can naught be done to stop it?
Can no remedy be found?
Or must we always quit the house
When sister's beau comes round?

If we leave them the parlor
Why isn't that enough?
Sure one chair is sufficient
If they're very far in luff.

Why, even little teacher
Has to hunt a safer clime;
Because the sister aired her views
'Bout hanging round one time.

So we hit out the back door
When beau hits the front lawn;
And all of us are outcasts
'Til sister's beau has gone.

April 26, 1921

Written for Margaret H.

MY HONEY BOY

Some think a made to order boy
Would be extremely fine:
But ‘made to order’ couldn’t beat
This Honey Boy of mine.

Of course that isn’t his real name.
His name is Cyril or Cyl:
But always I say Honey Boy.
I think that’s nicer still.

We have the store at Cloverleaf.
We also keep the mail.
So that gives him a good excuse
One that will never fail.

Now, here’s the way he has it planned:
And every chance he gets,
He comes down in the evening
To get some cigarettes.

He certainly is very smart.
For ‘tis his morning rule
To always get here for the mail
Before I start for school.

On Sundays, when there is no mail,
Why then he brings the milk.
Now don’t you think that’s smart of him?
He’s just as smooth as silk.

I’ll tell you it is lovely with
A Honey Boy like mine:
He always lays his plans so well,
And always they work fine.

They say he did not use to come
So often to the store;
But, folks will say he’s living here
If he comes down much more.



Still, sometimes Honey worries me.
‘Tis when he goes off with
A little girl at Dugald
Whose name is Charlotte Smith

He’s awfully good at loving me.
I don’t think I should worr-;
But, I’m not sure but what he says
The same nice things to her.

You know, I think he isn’t quite
Sure which one he likes best;
But, I am out to conquer, and
I hope I’LL come out best.

Sometimes when we are all alone
With no one in the hall,
He says so much, I wonder if
He really means it all.

He’s really very nice to me.
You’d think he was nice too
If once you looked into his eyes
Of lovely, dreamy, blue.

Although I like him awfully well,
One hint I’d like to give.
I wish that my dear Honey Boy
Would be more Demonstrative.

April 23, 1921

SOMETHING

There's an awfully funny feeling
That you get right in your chist;
And you're always seeing something
Through a dreamy sort of mist;

And you seem so light inside that
You could almost walk on air;
'Cause you're always seeing something
Oh those eyes, and wavy hair!

Something haunts you in the daytime,
And you dream of it at night.
You wish sometimes those dreams were true
So you could hug it tight.

Every single time you see IT.
You feel funny-like within;
And your heart beats like the dickens
'Sif 'twould come out through your skin.

If you have this kind of feeling
With a lovely sense of joy;
Something surely has your ticket
And I'll say, "It ain't no boy."

November 20, 1921

ROMANCE

(In nine words)

A pretty girl;
A boy;
Nobody looking;
Oh joy!

December 1920

IT'S A GO

You ask me now to write a song.

You say, "I know you can."

You put it so I can't escape

And call myself a man.

Because I write some foolish stuff

In verses with a rhyme,

You think I am a poet

And can do it any time.

With your, "By the way," presumption

"Please a favour may I ask."

If it isn't too much trouble

Won't you do this little task.

"I surely would esteem it

As a favour" — yes, a whale —

"If you'd write a little song for me

The teacher of Eastdale."

So much I get from Mary,

And so far all is well;

But see what is before me,

Take this here from Isabell.

"What think you, is the latest?

We have organized a club;

We're going to have a paper."

Now — here comes the rub.

She don't make no Presumption

She don't say, "As a favour."

She says, "Compose about us,

Come on you little shaver."

"I'll put it in our paper,

And I'll send a print to you."

Now don't you think that bossy?

See what I have to do.



You're not the first to ask it;

I'll also let you know.

Sure Agnes she was after me

A week or so ago

But, what avails this writing?

It's but a lot of talk.

It's not the least bit serious,

So just tell it to walk.

But, am I going to do it?

That's what you want to know.

I am. I'll do my very best;

For Mary, It's a go.

February 22, 1921

NORMAL

When I came to the Normal,
I thought I knew it all.
It wasn't fifteen minutes
Till my thought it had a fall.

A map of South America
One teacher had me draw.
It was a real creation:
Darndest thing you ever saw.

Next teacher started off so nice;
He asked me, "What's a word?"
I thought and thought for other words
To say, "A word's a word."

Another asked me why I learned
That two and two made four;
And then and there my knowledge sank
Down far beneath the floor.

But now, I'm cutting ABC's
And adding two and two.
I really think I'll learn some yet.
I know some now. Do You?

September 1920

Editor's note: "Normal School" was a teacher training program, primarily for the elementary grades.

OBSERVING

On mornings when I have to teach;
And when the school at last I reach:
I step inside and close the door
And feel like sinking through the floor.

I take a great deep breath of air,
And try to stop my rising hair,
Throw out my chest, and look so brave
The children all won't misbehave.

And when the lesson has begun,
I feel like leaving on the run:
But I look brave and try to see
'Tis not so bad as I thought 'twould be.

The lesson over, I resign
And sit and watch those friends of mine.
I don't know how it is with you:
But I'm sure glad when I get through.

December 1, 1920

SPARROWS

Between the floor and the ceiling,
I sit straining my mental power;
Writing many a letter:
Yes, writing them by the hour.

I hear on the roof above me
The patter of sparrows' feet;
The sound of their many discords
In tones not soft nor sweet.

From my chair I see out the window
Descending the railway track
A noisy, long, old freight train:
Drawn by an engine black.

A chirping, and then a silence,
But, I can plainly see
The noisy little beggars
Are trying to worry me.

It will take more than sparrows to do it.
Their row doesn't fizz on me,
Beyond giving inspiration
For this so-called Poetry.

February, 1921

SEAM SONG

From Carnegie comes a pleading
Help a teacher in distress.
Sure you wouldn't have a fellow
Going 'round in his undress.
'Cause you know my Sunday britches
Are a wearing out behind;
And believe me 'tis embarrassing
To have air holes on ones mind.

(Chorus)

Needed for my britches
Hundred and fifty stitches
And a patch to cover up the holes behind.
I must stay unbended
'Til my pants are mended
And I'll have to face 'em all
'Cause I'm thin behind.

March 24, 1921

To the tune of "Keep the Home Fires Burning"

MY SUIT

The sun is bright, the sky is clear,
The whole world knows that spring is here.
So I come out in my new suit.
Mrs. Miller says, "It looks real cute."
And Mr. Miller looked at me,
"You have a better fit I see."
But Verda; she makes no remark.
So I'm completely in the dark
To know how my new suit appears
To those fair charmers men call dears.

April 17, 1921

OTTO

Last night as I pondered in doubt,
I thought that I ought to go out.
Since I thought what I ought,
I got up like a shot
And I slid down the stairs on my snout.
But I stopped my precipitous flight
As an auto shot out o' the night;
There I stood with a grin
As I heard from within,
“I ought to kiss Otto good-night.”

July, 1939.

To Commemorate the departure of Otto Perlett from summer school.

HOT STUFF

If I were but a shemale
Now that hot weather's here,
Without pants, shirt, or girdle,
To dine I might appear.

But since I be a hemale,
Tradition and all that
Demands that I wear coat and tie
And fry in my own fat.

Wo Iss Me

Official temperatures:

Monday	100°
Tuesday	91°
Wednesday	86°

OUR SUBBY

When Jewitt stays away all day,
 We soon begin to sicken.
We have an awful substitute
 I'll say, "She ain't no chicken."

She says, "Now show me where you are
 And I will make you hustle."
Perhaps sometimes she wears a smile,
 Or maybe wears a bustle.

Her mug may be of plaster cast,
 Or maybe made of copper;
But if she once got going,
 I don't know how we'd stop her.

She may be very pretty for
 Her likes I ne'er did see;
Perhaps she is – though I think not –
 La Belle Dame Sans Merci.

GRADE XII

There is a fine grade XII this year;
Such terrors they are to work;
I never saw a better class
And less inclined to shirk.

They do their history every day;
It never is forgotten.
Compare them with the others;
The others sure are rotten.

In doing English they delight,
And always have their answers
About those old guy Classicists
And also those Romancers.

They're always right up to the mark
In Physics and Chemistry.
How they can ever do so much
It surely is a mystery.

In Algebra and Geometry,
They make their teacher smile.
He couldn't find a better class
Within a quarter mile.

This sure would be an ideal state;
It could not well be worse;
But, sad to say 'tis not the truth
For all is vice-verse.

February 23, 1920

TOPSY TURVY

‘Twas on a sunny morning
The birds had gone to rest;
The aurora borealis
Was glimmering in the west.

The frogs are in their downy nests.
You can hear them softly call.
While Johnny Muggins horse and cow
Are perched upon the wall.

The chickens chirp beneath the eaves;
The sparrows bill and coo;
And all the world is upside down
But, I’m alone with you.

The rain falls up; ‘tis winter time;
The snow lies ten feet deep;
While swimming in the glassy pool,
The lizards snoring sleep.

The green leaves whisper to the breeze;
The flowers nod ‘neath the sun;
While in the field, the rocking horse
Has made a grand home run.

The tender moon with smiling face
Has sprung up from the pole;
While down pretty country lane
Limousines jelly roll.

So upside down, and downside up;
Everything’s in a muddle;
But what care we, we are alone
And in my arms you cuddle.

TO BE

So I dipt into the future
And saw what few could see
Men and women of tomorrow
Boys and girls of used to be.

Saw our grade XII scattered widely
To the far ends of the earth;
Each one leader ‘mong their people
Proving to the world their worth.

They look back in idle moments
To the time they loved the best;
When they all went to St. John’s Tech.
And enjoyed life with the rest.

Those the days they all remember;
Those the days they can’t forget;
They can picture in their memories,
Every detail, clear as yet.

When Miss Thompson and Miss Turner
Taught them English every day;
And they made rhymes ‘bout the subby
When Mr. Jewitt stayed away.

When Doc. Triggerson taught them science
And was laid up with his hand;
And Miss Hewton on the History
Made them work to beat the band.

When you strive for future standing;
Work to gain the topmost rung;
These the days that you’ll remember,
Make life worth it while you’re young.

June 20, 1921

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

(William Gresham)

Gosh! This thing hurts awful.
I wish I was never born.
The cause of all this trouble is
I've got a measly corn.

Every time I step like this,
It hurts me to the bone.
I think if it keeps on like this
I'll try some Freezone.

The thing is on my right foot
The third toe from the left.
I wish 'twas on the other feet
That when I got mine were left.

Whether 'tis not enough boot for the foot,
Or too much foot for the boot,
It all amounts to the same thing
And I wish the thing was OOT.

March, 1920

SUBBY

Chimbley Christmas! Holy smokes!
This subby business is beyond all jokes.
I'm not the fellow who likes to bet;
But that dame this morning is the worst one yet.

She's not the least addicted to fat.
She highly resembles a baseball bat.
Her head could be the knob at the end;
The only difference is, she might bend.

“You should be developed in more than one line.
Yet mathematics is not one of mine.
I've a lot of knowledge beneath my dome
So I'll dope you out the history of Rome.”

Now we'll start at the top and travel down,
And have her picture from toe to crown.
Her hair is done high above her ears.
To show her lugs she never fears.

Her face is as long as an empty bag.
She's highly accomplished in the art ChinWag.
Her lean neck pokes from her sagging blouse
Which much resembles a picture house.

The blouse is tinted a delicate blue.
I Ne'er beheld such ethereal hue.
Her skirt though short is very mete
As canopy to shade such feet.

These latter items we'll omit,
But her booties; Boy! do they fit?
This is ‘most all, yet let us hope
We have no more of this Roman dope.

Her age; I could not dare compute.
She is a dame of swell repute.
She was around 396 B.C.
You figure it, too much for me.

Let's hope for Jewitt's swift return
For such a sub, I'd never yearn.
So say farewell to her history dope.
That she never returns, is my fondest hope.

March 22, 1920

SUBBY SPECIAL

This morning when I reached the school,

I thought I would be late.

I would have suffered a relapse,

Had I but known my fate.

They greeted me with, “Good morning.”

And then they dealt their blow.

Tuesday exam in such and such

And Friday so and so.

Then we went down to twenty three

O’ Jewitt never came;

And for our subby, in there walked

A pretty little dame.

Her dress was blue with scarlet trimmed.

Her hair was brown and curly.

Really without fooling,

She was a dainty girlie.

She put some questions on the board

And made us get to work.

She’d not allow while she was boss

A single one to shirk.

First period, we worked very hard

We did a single question.

We feared to work with greater speed

For fear of indigestion.

Then we went down to room fifteen

To learn some geometry.

Our subby dear was on the spot

To see what she could see.

Though we were very, very good

And did not make much noise,

Subby set her eye on us

And said, “Now boys! now boys!”

At last the bell began to ring,

And we smiled with delight.

One good thing ‘bout a subby,

We’ve no homework tonight.

THE FLOUR GIRL

A quaint oldfashioned flower girl
 Comes tripping down the street,
Her basket full of God's own make
 So tender, fair, and sweet,
One cannot choose 'twixt girl and flowers
 The sweeter of the sweet.

Look, now the modern Flour girl

 Stalks down the pavèd walk,
Her latest model Paris pumps
 Will scarcely let her talk.

Her nose is pointed skyward.

 Her face, it looks like chalk.
Did she fall in the flour barrel
 Before she took her walk?

No, say! She thinks she looks real cute
 She thinks she's dolled up "Jake".

That mugwash cost her fifty cents,
 It's "Kiss Me" New York make.

She sees men stare. It makes her dream
 Of hearts that she will take:

While they dream of a dipping chair
 Installed beside the lake.

A good oldfashioned dipping chair

 Put to moderate use:
A half a dozen dips or so,
 Might soak those old corns loose.

Another three or four might serve
 To fix the paint abuse;
But no, we can't, 'twould kill the fish
 And spoil the lake for use.

1922

TO MY BROTHER

To my little roughneck brother,
Fed on taters milk and swill,
Living in a nice location
In the shelter of a hill.

He had wonderful ambitions;
Some of them would make you laugh;
He resorted to such measures;
Even swiping from a calf.

See yon little calf a bawling;
Crying for a drink of swill;
But the pail is standing empty;
Kippy boy, first had his fill.

He got in a gang of tough ones;
Joined a club of Tuxis pugs
Who for practice; one night weekly
Soak each other in their mugs.

They must needs create a ball team
Junior champions of the world;
People sure would look and listen
When their pennant was unfurled.

Then came their chance to show the world;
'Twas on the third of June,
On the baseball diamond, Manitou,
On a sunny afternoon.

They had won the prize in marching;
Such a military bunch.
Now they're going to cop the honours,
Darlingford is served for lunch.

Now the rivals are assembled.
And the Ump, he shouts, "Play ball!"
Then the pitcher takes a windup;
Kip is in the batter's stall.



Whizz, look out! the ball is coming;
See the batter's noble pose.
Now he's swinging like a madman;
Ball, is curving round his nose.

He recovers now his senses
And begins to raise his bat.
Bingo! smash! the bat is busted.
Kip, he blinks, "Wha – what was that?"

Then he grips his bat with muscle.
Now he'll knock the fielders out.
Pat! the ball is with the catcher.
Ump, he says, "The batter's out!"

Others came and they did likewise.
Oh, but ain't this heaps of fun?
Kip, I see him; oh so cheerful.
Just two innings and – one run.

Call a halt, the game is ended.
We must not disgrace the green:
La Riviere has got ONE WHOLE RUN
Darlingford, just seventeen.

Now hang out your royal pennant,
Hail the victors of the day!
Where are they, the La Riviere champs,
See them hiding 'neath the hay.

Next the jumping, it commences,
And the hoppers are turned loose.
Here, my brother is the winner.
See him leaping like a moose.

We'll forget the baseball honours;
Can the victory winning stuff;
Anyway they won the swig pot;
Little brother did his stuff.

IF

If you can get your shot when all about you
Are missing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when your rink doubts you
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can sweep and not be tired by sweeping
Even when the swept rock misses by a mile;
If you can win and not become inflated;
If you can take a trimming with a smile;

If you can see the shot you disapproved of
Turn out to show that you were in the know;
If you can see your good suggestion taken,
And yet not come back with, "I told you so;"
If you can see the rocks you drew so nicely
Both cancelled by the next man's lucky draw;
If you can win the game with your last wick
And then forget it – within forty days;

If you can take a chance; not guard the shot rock
But try to pass their second shot, for five,
Throw wide and raise them in to count a couple,
Then try the same shot next end – if alive;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after hope is gone,
And so curl on when there is nothing in you
Except the will to win which says; Play on!

If you can go to Brandon to a bonspiel,
And not see two rocks where there's only one;
If you can play day after day and take it,
And bring home trights and the cup you won;
If you can then turn back a local challenge,
And show us wondering curlers how 'tis done;
We must rise, drink your health, and say,
"Here's to you!"
We all agree, YOU MUST BE GOOD, "Curl on!"

1940

To commemorate the Glorious achievement of Doris, Myrtle, Fanny, and Ellen, at the Brandon Ladies Bonspiel, February, 1940.

MY LOVE

My love is fair;
 My love is fat;
But she's my love,
 For all of that.

My love she has
 Such monster charms
I can't reach round
 With both my arms.

Her eyes turn in;
 Her teeth stick out;
Her shin must not
 Be talked about.

Her face is long;
 Her forehead short;
Her little nose
 Supports a wart.

Her disposition
 Like the cat;
But she's my love,
 For all of that.

1922

N.B. *To whom it may concern:*
The above definitely does not refer to the girl I married. Any similarity to persons living or dead is purely coincidental.
So help me!

J.C.W.

POOR JOE

I joined the R.C.A.F., Boys,
To help it win the war.
Before sunset that day, I swept
The Lindsay Building floor.

Then I was sent to old Quebec
That famed historic region:
A lone, unwanted, foreigner,
In someone's foreign legion.

They gave me half my outfit.
I waited for a hat,
A full three weeks within four walls,
Barb wire topped at that.

They fed me beans for breakfast.
They gave me beans for lunch.
If I took soup for dinner,
The day's stale beans I'd munch.

They wakened me at six A.M.
They ran me to P.T.
They jumped me here, and stretched me there,
'Til I could hardly see.

They drilled me on the tarmac
Beneath the broiling sun.
They even made me answer to
The name of Weel-yam-son.

After a month, to my delight
They posted me on draft
To Mountain View. I little knew
Ho long and hard Fate laughed.

When I checked in at six-o-five,
I did not then know what
Awaited unsuspecting me,
Poor, green, deluded, nut.

I found a bunk in Thirteen West
Among some friendly Joes
Who swung a lyin-tific line
About – Lord only knows.



On Tuesday the real show began,
When hour after hour
They showered me with sheets of dope
On guns, sights, blasting power,
Air-speed, wind-drift, T.V., height scale,
Brisance, Mark II, deflection,
Collimating graticules,
G.P's, short arm inspection.

Sear springs, sight rings, A.P's, (damn thing)
Cordites, and detonators,
Screw, stem, backflash, ice cream, more hash,
And flash eliminators.

On Wednesday night, the second week
A little Progress test
Recalled to mind that corny line
“Go West young man; Go West.”

Would that I could but heed that call:
Out where the west begins;
But no, I'm doomed, I'm screwed, I'm Joed,
Here with the Joe Has-beens.

Week after week I carry on
Scrub floors, wash clothes, and then
Collect a ten-spot; look at it;
And recall the day when -----

But, that's another story, so...
I go to work once more:
Amatol, baratol, T.N.T., damn it all,
Use flannel two by four.

They tell me when I'm feeling low,
That if, or when, I pass;
I may get two stripes on my arm
Or three across my az – muth bracket.

Hope springs eternal so they say.
But will it still spring when –
With peace at last, Joe's listed with
The wars forgotten men?

Who knows? Who cares? Who gives a damn?
On with the bloody show.
There wouldn't be an air force if
It were not for Poor Joe.

September, 1941

FAIREY BATTLE

Today we stood on Wings Parade
Upon the flying field,
Where gaudy little Harvards roared
As from the line they wheeled.

I watched a Fairey Battle leave
The runway for the skies;
I swallowed hard, for as I watched
The tears came to my eyes;

A drab old Fairey Battle with
Some patches here and there;
A veteran of Dunkirk,
And all that happened there.

My mind strayed from the Wings Parade;
Just why, I could not tell;
But I stood to attention for
That Veteran of Hell.

Out gunned; out flown; outmoded; yes,
Out classed in every way;
That same old Fairey Battle helped
The British save the day.

They say the Fairey Battles there
Were blasted from the skies;
But ‘though the men and planes were lost,
The spirit never dies.

And as I watched the Battle fly
Away, I felt a thrill.
I realized that grim old kite
Was “in there” fighting still.

For Battles have the spirit, they
Instil in those who fly;
The absolute conviction that
Old warriors never die.

September 22, 1941

PRECES

Twelve long weeks of toting preces,
Twelve long weeks of speech profane,
Twelve long weeks of progress testing,
How could any man plead sane?

What I learned, I have forgotten
What forgotten, I don't know;
What endured, from bad to rotten;
Who should wish to be a Joe?

Now the weary time is over
Preces crammed, our books are full.
Here's an unofficial rating:
Ninety eight percent, S--- Bull.

October 13, 1941

Editor's note: I think he may have meant "précis" but I can't be sure that it was not something specific to the context.

SNAKE EYES

One roll too many;
One spot too few;
One ten-spot left;
One sergeant who
With lagging step
And head bowed low
Knows that “Easy come”
Precedes “Easy go”.

1941

THIRTY-SEVEN COURSE

There are strange things done in the Air Force, Son,
By the boys who roam the skies.
The barrack lights have seen strange sights
That would bring dust to your eyes.
Air Service Schools have their special rules
That will make you curse and swear.
Even Mountain View has one or two
Strange rules and airmen there.

There was Lulu Brown from a little town
At the West end of the lake.
On I.G. parade, he was much dismayed
By a sudden belly-ache.
There was Donald Robb always on the job;
Grisé, always, "Hot like hell";
And Mac Kay from the West with hair on his chest
And the phrase I Dare not tell.

There was always fun when Mike Salamon
Started rooting for Duck Lake;
And debate waxed hot until Sanderson shot
The dope, and took the cake.
In the workshop too, was no wrench so blue
As Simpson with a file;
And Sleep's top bunk often rose and sunk
As he weathered the storms with a smile.

There was "that That" boy, Old New Brunswick's joy,
Ask Doherty, Gaudette, Lavoie.
Ask Gamble too, when or if he knew,
Why Echenberg learned to draw?
Alford, right guide, was B.C.'s pride;
The Foothills gift was Jackman
And always there be it foul or fair
Up with the dawn, Ted Casson.



There was Cuillerier who liked to play;
Hancock the triple tooter;
And St. Laurent who was never content
Unless chasing a skirt on a scooter.
Top bunk, Legault, what he didn't know,
Hodgson knew, about gophers.
Last of all Rivet who didn't stay
And another of the loafers.

Jay See, November 1, 1941

Editor's note: I think the "Thirty-Seven Course" was one of his WWII training assignments. This poem was included in a programme prepared for the group's graduation dinner – a "Thirty-Seven Course Banquet".

CONTRACT BRIDGE

‘Twas the night before Christmas –
Two guests in our house
Had started to play bridge
With me and my spouse.

“Please tell me,” she shouted,
“Why didn’t you double?
‘Twas plain from the start
That we had them in trouble.”

“Tis futile, my dear,”
Said I, taking no stand,
“To discuss it with you –
Let us play the next hand.”

“Remember next time,”
Said she, icing a frown,
“To double a contract
That’s sure to go down.”

So I picked up my cards
In a downtrodden state,
Then I opened One Spade
And awaited my fate.

East dealer.
North-South vulnerable.

NORTH

S 9876
H 65432
D 8765
C ---

WEST

S ---
H QJ 10 9
D KQJ 10 9
C KQJ 10

EAST

S AKQJ10
H A K 8 7
D ---
C A 987

SOUTH

S 5432
H ---
D A 432
C 65432



The guy sitting South
Was like many I've known
He played and he bid
In a world all his own.

“Two diamonds,” he countered
With scarcely a care;
The Ace in his hand
Gave him courage to spare.

My wife, she smiled faintly
And tossing her head,
Leaned over the table:
“I double,” she said.

And North, for some reason
I cannot determine,
Bid two Hearts as though
He were preaching a sermon.

I grinned as I doubled,
Enjoying the fun,
And turned round to South
To see where he would run.

But South, undistressed,
Not at loss for a word,
Came forth with Two Spades –
Did I hear what I heard?

The other two passed
And in sheer disbelief
I said, “Double, my friend,
That’ll bring you to grief.”

South passed with a nod,
His composure serene;
My wife with a flourish
Led out the heart queen.



I sat there and chuckled
 Inside o'er their fix –
But South very calmly
 Ran off eight straight tricks!

He ruffed the first heart
 In his hand right away,
And then trumped a club
 On the very next play.

He crossruffed the hand
 At a breathtaking pace,
'Til I was left holding
 Five spades to the ace.

In anguish my wife cried,
 "You're mind's growing old!
Don't you see six no trump
 In this hand is ice cold?"

By doubling this time
 I'd committed a sin –
It just goes to prove
 That you never can win.

‘TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

‘Twas the night before Christmas – throughout the White House
Not a critter was stirring (not even a louse).

The swag-bags were swung by the chimney with care
In hopes that St. Maurice Stans soon would be there.

The plumbers were nestled all snug in their beds
While visions of file-cases danced through their heads.
Pat in her robe, and Dick in his crown
Were making a list of foes to put down.

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter –
“Sirica!” cried Dick, his teeth all a-chatter.
He dived for the window and tried to escape,
But fell to the floor all tangled in tape.

The sight on the lawn stilled the cries in their throats:
A high-laden sleigh pulled by eight shaggy goats.
It flew toward the roof as quick as a flash
And vanished before you could say “Sam Dash”

The funny old driver was heard to exclaim
A “whoa” to his goats as he called them by name:
“Whoa, Ehrlichman, Haldeman, Hunt, Dean and Krogh –
McCord, Magruder, and Colson – all, whoa!”

Then the jolly old elf leaped out of his sleigh,
And grabbing his bag, he was up and away –
Straight down the chimney he plunged, with a bound
Before Pat and Dick could even turn ‘round.

His eyes, how they twinkled! His dimples – rose merry!
His cheeks and his nose were as ruddy as sherry!
‘Twas Jolly Sam Ervin – his round little belly
Shook when he laughed like a flickering telly.

“Ho! Ho!” quoth good Sam, “I have brought you some weenies!”
But when Dick unrolled ‘em, they turned out – subpoenas!
With a great roar of rage, Dick hurled them aside.
“I stand on Executive Privilege!” he cried.

Then Sam laid his thumb to the tip of his nose,
And waggling his fingers, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang to his sleigh. To the goats he quoth:
“Git along little doggies – yawl still under oath!”

Then as the thundering herd took off like a bird,
And as they departed, Sam Ervin was heard:
“Peace and Goodwill to all who go straight –
Happy Christmas to All! But to you – Watergate!”

December 25, 1973

THE PILL

(All sing at the beginning)

If the world population explosion
Is making you feel rather ill
The Doctors have said you can hop into bed
And put all your faith in the pill.

Chorus (sing between every verse)

Put all your faith in the pill
Put all your faith in the pill
The doctors have said you can hop into bed
And put all your faith in the pill.

- (1) The pill is a birth-control method
It's the best one developed to date
It's really no bother – just take one in water
So get yours before it's too late.
- (2) The doctor said I needn't worry
So I joyfully hopped into bed
I already have four – don't want any more
When I find that doctor, He's dead.
- (3) The pill is a wonderful tonic
It's good for what ails you alright
For varicose veins or a growth on the brain
And you have peace of mind every night.
- (4) Our president had a real back ache
But she wasn't pregnant until
They made a mistake and got her to take
A great big fertility pill.
- (5) One week-end at a sorority party
My man fed me too many gins
Yes, I drank my fill and forgot my pill
And now I'm expecting twins.



- (6) They've been proven and tried by the Russians
The Chinese now make them at home
It may not be true, but word has leaked through
That they're being tested in Rome.
- (7) As you look at me, you must wonder
How come this condition I'm in
My kids I could kill 'cause they took my pill
And replaced it with Bayer as-pi-rin.
- (8) All of the drug stores are happy
Their income we now guarantee
They dispense the pill – but we pay the bill
They're oh-oh so necess-a-ry.

(All sing the last verse)

- (9) Oh boy are we mad at those doctors
They've ruined all our party plans
If we ever catch them – it is very cer-tain
We'll strangle them with our bare hands.

THE FIFTH FREEDOM

Freeways to right of us,
Freeways to left of us,
Freeways above us,
Freeways below;

Road signs to right of us,
Road signs to left of us,
Road signs above us,
More signs on the road;

Merging trucks right of us,
Speeding trucks left of us,
Slow trucks in front of us,
Express truck on our tail;

Trailers to right of us,
Cars to the left of us,
Pickups and panels,
Limousines and wrecks;

Volkswagens, Datsuns,
Lincolns, Mercedes,
All rushing wild-eyed,
Like bats out of Hades;

Drivers with long hair,
Drivers with no hair,
Old ladies, patrolmen,
Young ladies and kids;

All exercising
The un-named Fifth Freedom
To Drive on the Freeways,
To hell with the rest.

God grant me the skill
To make wise snap decisions,
Where Absence of Body
Tops Presence of Mind.

God grant that we, two,
May survive the great rat race,
And live 'til tomorrow,
To run it again.

1970

(Written after my first experience towing a trailer on Los Angeles freeways in 1970)

PUNVEF E.N

First

TEVC

Tenfc EVTUG. UNAQF
firmly. Tenfc EVTUG NEZ
between RYOBJ and
FUBHYQRE with your YRSG
UNAQ and envfr him

Fta

Form Δ with the two
GUHZOF and VAQRK. SVATREF
placed against the SBERURNQ
P.W. FURYBZVGU meaning
CRESRPGVBA
S.W.is WNU meaning TBQ

2nd

TEVC. Tenfc EVTUG UNAQF
firmly.Tenfc EVTUG NEZ
at RYOBJ.and envfr him
Fta.Pass your open EVTUG
UNAQ to and fro before
you as if dividing JUGRE
P.W. ARQRE

3rd TEVC. Tenfc EVTUG UNAQF
firmly.Tenfc EVTUG NEZ
between LEVFG and RYOBJ
and Envfr him
Fta.As if FJVATVAT a PRAFRE
Left UNAQ at EVTUG
PURRX CNYZ outward
P.W. OREVGU meaning a
PBIRANAG
S.W.RY,RYBUR or TBQ, the
TBQ of VFENRY
P.Z.The JBEQ to be given in a
W.to the I.P.Z--RYBUVZ means
THE PERNGBE The ORTVAAVAT
of all things

Editor's note: I have no idea. Just driving the car, remember?

Update: I cracked the code in September 2005.

CRIMES OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

These date exclusively from his retirement, and include references to a number of friends and family celebrating anniversaries or retiring themselves. For the sake of Plot Development, his Farewell Speech is last.



REPORT ON WISE ENTERPRISES

In this modern age of mass production, every enterprise or production line is subjected to spot checks by independent experts. I qualify as an expert on the grounds that I am the only other man still in circulation, who is married to one of the original McBain sisters. For the same reason, I cannot claim to be entirely independent.

However, all results have been carefully Kelly-rated and are uncensored. By “uncensored” I refer to the fact that Irene was not asked to approve the final draft of the report. In the report, I shall include only sufficient family history to validate the checks. This being a pseudo-official report, I trust that you will permit me to follow the script rather closely to avoid error.

It was away back in nineteen-ought-eleven, that Mary McBain abandoned thoughts of an independent career and adopted the slogan LET GEORGE DO IT – not as a device for escaping responsibility but as an expression of complete confidence in the integrity and expertise of one, George Wise. There might well have been those who questioned the wisdom of her decision. However, today, they cannot question the fact that Mary has been Wise, and much wiser ever since.

The first opportunity for a check was July 6, 1929: They tell me that Mary and George were in Clandeboye, Manitoba, on that date. But, being Independence Day (the day I bartered away my independence), Mary and George were among the least of my concerns on that date. I must, in all fairness disqualify myself as an expert on anything at that particular time.

July 1930, in the Assiniboine valley near Shellmouth, Manitoba: Judged on the basis of the well-stocked, well laid out dairy barn, and the efficient system of handling the produce; the many stacks of hay in the valley, and the efficient gang of home-produced haymakers; there was every indication that George had been making hay and Mary had LET GEORGE DO IT.



The thought just flashed through my mind: Would it have made any difference, had the New Holland Hay Baler and the Pill had been on the market two generations earlier? The big rambling house in the valley was a most enjoyable place to visit. Everyone was busy; at work or mischief. When it came to caring for the house and family, there was no thought of the Slogan. Mary was so busy she might best be epitomized by THE WHITE TORNADO seen in T.V. commercials.

July 1931, the same locale: George was being lured away from the hay meadow and dairy barn by a former love, the LOVE OF STEEL WORK. He was working on the construction of a new steel bridge across the Assiniboine river a short distance from their valley home. Mary, let George do it.

There followed a long interval during which we saw very little of Mary and George. Everyone seemed to be on the move during and following the war.

The final series of checks cover the period from 1968 to 1971: George finally slowed down and retired to their home on 27th street so I was able to catch up to him. Every year we manage to get in several rounds of conversational-cribbage. In the house on 27th street, I have detected a little difference of opinion as to which of the two is the better crib player. With Mary's luck, she concedes nothing to George's skill. She is always on the alert. Every once in a while George tries a fast count. Mary, NEVER lets George do it.

As to the future of WISE ENTERPRISES: I foresee no valid reason why their quest for "29 hands" should not continue unabated for many more happy years during which we wish for George, the desire, and for Mary, the alertness to keep him under control.

In conclusion: I will not attempt to say how delighted we are to be here to make such a favourable report. I have been telling some of our friends back in Fort Frances that making our decision to move to B.C., we are following the advice of the Wise man of the mountain. (And I don't mean Chief Dan George.)



We attended a Golden Wedding celebration a few weeks ago when we picked up a copy of a little poem which had a few ideas which appealed to us as suitable for a Diamond setting. We hope you like it. Attach no significance to the fact that it was framed; or the fact that the frame is of gold. We thought of Gold studded with diamonds but, we were fresh out of diamonds. I will try to read it:

Diamond Wedding Day

This is the House of Marriage that has stood for Sixty Years
Fashioned of troubled times, and roofed with good:
Washed with a million tears.
The rafters reach up to the sky,
The floors are worn by the glad feet of children.
On that beginning morn, Faith burned high
When you began to build this Happy House.
Now hear the rafters ring!
With voices of children and great grandchildren that arouse
Old hearts and make them sing.
Palaces have been built of rarest wood,
But none so beautiful appears
As this, the House of Marriage, that has stood for
Sixty Years.

Let us drink a toast to the MASTER BUILDERS,
Mary and George.

August 16, 1971

ROSE AND ALBERT

Before we become too involved in collecting food, or too full for words, I would like to say a few:

All my life, I have been listening to songs about Roses: My Wild Irish Rose – Yellow Rose of Texas – Sweet Rosie O’Grady – Second Hand Rose – Roses, Bloomers in Picardy – All the World is waiting for the Sun Rose – (forgive me, my typewriter is always making mistakes like that). I am sure that everyone present could list at least twenty songs about Roses.

Just as the United States, the great Melting Pot of Races, produced an American, So – this profusion of Roses produced What all the World was Waiting for – Our Rose, the Epitome of Love and Romance.

In all fairness to Men’s Lib, I would like to give equal time to Albert. Unfortunately – I cannot recall ever hearing even one song about Albert. I once heard a poem about Albert. He was a very mischievous English kid. One day, his father took little Albert to the zoo to see the animals – poor little Albert was eaten by a lion.

I have heard of Prince Albert: a brand of high quality pipe tobacco – It was canned. Then there is Albert, of the T.V. commercial – one of the guys with a great idea.

When, Our Albert, a man with all the right connections, got the Great Idea of teaming up with Our American Beauty – Rose, everyone was justified in expecting fantastic results. Today – thirty one years later, in confirmation of their Great Expectations, I present exhibits H and C – Howard and Chris.

Will you join me in a toast to our Favourite Couple, Rose and Albert?

“May you live as long as you want to, and want to as long as you live.”

February 17, 1974

TOAST TO JOY & JOHN

In recent years, we have heard much about Opportunities for Youth and Welfare for the Aged. Today, I would like to say a few words about some of those who fall in a category In Between: Those who have enough Youth in their hearts to make one forget any traces of snow on the roof. I would like to suggest how well they fare if they take full advantage of the opportunities inherent in Retirement.

There are many misconceptions regarding retirement. I will not waste your time or mine in attempting to enumerate them. It will suffice to say that many people regard an announcement of retirement as a public admission that you are Caput; you are definitely Over the Hill; you can only operate efficiently on alcohol spiked with Geritol or Vitamin pills. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Retirement does not mean the End but the Beginning of a whole New Life unhampered by the thousand and one tedious little worries encountered in working for a living.

Robert Browning said, “Grow old along with me. The best is yet to be: the last of life for which the first was made.” Tennyson has Ulysses say many things: “All experience is an arch wherethrough gleams that untravelled world whose margin fades forever and forever as I move.” “I am part of all that I have met.” “That which we are, we are. Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will.” “Much work of note may yet be done.” – So much for mis-quoted poetry.

I hope you noted that all of the quotations are forward-looking – an inducement to travel and adventure in new places among new friends. At the age of retirement, people are ideally qualified to get the best out of life if they focus their attention on the Future. When one reaches the age for retirement, Making History is much more important than Reading or Writing it.



Fortunate are those persons who retire while they are still able to take advantage of their new-found freedom. Each one of us can name friends who delayed their retirement too long. As one old retired citizen put it, "Now I have the time to roam in greener pastures, but I can't jump over the fence." We all know that Joy and John have earned the right to retire. Both look fit and well able to jump over any fence which might prevent their moving into greener pastures together.

A toast to the lucky couple: "May you have many Happy years of retirement in Green Pastures."

June 9, 1974

EDNA & HERB MILLER'S 50TH

Friends: The chief reason for this gathering is to offer our Congratulations and Condolences to Edna and Herb on their 50th Wedding Anniversary. This may not be the exact date but – as Harry Lauder used to sing in one of his well-known songs, “I will never forget big MacPherson’s birthday. He was born in June but we held it in May – we couldn’t wait.” We were so in the mood for a celebration that we couldn’t wait for the 28th.

As a matter of fact, there are several reasons why even fifty years did not give me time to prepare a speech worthy of this occasion. You who are retired will appreciate how busy a retired person can be. The rest of you can eat your hearts out with envy.

All I intend to say is that what happened to Edna and Herb is the result of a blind date. Looking at them today I am sure that all will agree that neither of them needs any Condolences, so – we shower them with our congratulations and save the condolences for those who were not around to give Herb a little competition.

Edna and Herb: May you have many more Anniversaries and we would like nothing better than to be around to help you celebrate your Sixtieth.

March 17, 1978

Luncheon at the Mission Lakes Country Club on March 17. True date of anniversary March 28, 1978.

FAREWELL SPEECH

You will forgive me but I have had only 47 years to prepare this speech. Lest I forget some part of it, I have it on this punch card: all of my punch lines are on this card.

Friends, revellers, teachers,
Shed me no tears.

Thank you Leroy for those kind words.

I thank the staff for this gift. To me, this gift symbolizes my vision of the Holy Grail. It marks the end of a long, arduous, sometimes perilous quest which began January 5, 1921.

There are many ironies associated with retirement. This gift is a good example. For 42 years, in the classroom, I was GOOD – for nothing. (Members of the Press, if you quote me, please be careful: “I was GOOD – for nothing.”) Now, on the mere suggestion that I am going to be NOTHING – for good, I receive an award: this gift.

Someone has said, “Every man desires to live long, yet no man would be old.” So it is with retirement. We look forward to retirement with its freedom from routine and responsibility. We do not look forward with the same degree of pleasure to the halo, the impairment of health, the curtailment of income and activity, which is so often associated with retirement.

About a year ago, I heard what might well have been a retired teacher’s lament. Leroy told me this one. It was this, “Now, I have the time and wherewithall to travel in greener pastures, but, I can’t climb the fence.” I sincerely hope that I have not delayed my retirement too long.

There are many things about the Fort Frances High School which I am going to miss. I will miss the daily association with the staff and the students. I will miss those flights of intellectual irresponsibility and uninhibited humour which can burst forth spontaneously at any moment in the staff room. I will miss being around to at least join in the chorus when the staff sings to the principal:



Empty saddles in the new carrels
Where can those teachers be
Are they hiding in the storerooms,
The Labs, or you know where.
Empty saddles in the new carrels.

I will miss the daily walks through the Halls of Learning, from 103 to 302, to 204, to 231, to 318, to 306, to 204, back to 103.

One thing which has impressed me on those walks through the Halls of Learning is the complete absence of SLOW-learners. I even wondered if I should refer to them as “study halls” or “practice halls,” where the students practice what they have learned very well elsewhere. At times, in fact, most of the time, I have felt like a non-participant at a “Love-in”.

I will miss setting tests and examinations, marking examination papers and “PROCROSTING” the marks. You will not find the word “procrusting” in the dictionary, as I just invented it yesterday. However, a dictionary may give you some information regarding Procrustes and his bed which was undoubtedly the forerunner of the “Magic Median Modifier”.

It is traditional, at times like these, to say, “I leave Fort Frances High School with mixed emotions.” However, I will have to give it to you STRAIGHT, as I am completely out of MIX.

At the present moment, my feelings may be best summed-up in those famous words spoken by Adam on the day that nightlife was introduced to the Garden of Eden. On that particular occasion, Adam, in the gathering dusk of Eden, was preparing his bed for the night when he discovered Eve for the first time. There was a moment or two of breathless silence. Then – amid a slight rustling of leaves, in the slow measured tones of an amateur reading Braille, the voice of Adam came through the darkness, “Hip ----- hip ----- hooray.”

CRIMES OF HUMOUR

It is uncertain that any of these were composed by Kelly himself, but the fact that he enjoyed them enough to take the time to type them means that their inclusion serves the same purpose as that of his own creations: They tell us a little about who he was.



HALLOWEEN PARTY

A couple were invited to a swanky Halloween Party, so the wife got costumes for both of them. On the night of the party, she developed a terrible headache and told her husband to go without her. He protested, but she said all she was going to do was take a couple of aspirins and go to bed, and there was no need for his good time being spoiled by not attending. So he got his costume and off he went.

The wife, after sleeping soundly for about an hour, awoke without a sign of pain and as it was just a little after nine, she decided to go to the party. In as much as her husband did not know what kind of costume she was wearing, she thought it would be a good thing to slip into the party and observe how he acted when she wasn't around.

This she did, and as soon as she joined the party, the first one she observed was her husband cavorting around the dance floor with one chick after another, sipping a little beer here and there. So she slid up to him and being a rather seductive babe herself, he left his former partner high and dry and devoted his attention to the new stuff that had just arrived.

She let him go as he wished (naturally) and finally he whispered a little proposition in her ear. This she agreed to, so they went to one of the cars parked nearby and etc...etc....

Just before the unmasking at midnight, she slipped away, and went home and got into bed, wondering what kind of explanation her husband would make as to his behaviour. He arrived home about 1:00 a.m. and came right into the bedroom to ask how she was.

She was sitting up in the bed reading and asked, "What kind of a time did you have?"

He said, "Oh, the same old thing. You know I never have a good time when you aren't there."



Then she asked, “Did you dance much?”

“Well, I’ll tell you, I never danced a dance. When I got there, Pete, Bill and some of the other boys were stag, and we went into the den and played poker.

“But I’ll tell you one thing, the guy I loaned my costume to sure had a hell of a good time.”

THE PREACHER WHO WANTED TO MAKE MONEY

A preacher who wanted to raise money for his church was told there was a fortune in horse racing, so he decided to buy a horse and enter it in the races. However, at the local auction the going price was so steep that he came home with a donkey instead.

He figured that, since he had it, he might as well go ahead and enter it in the races. To his surprise, in the first race his donkey came in third. The next day, the racing sheets carried the headline: “Preacher’s Ass Shows”.

The preacher, though somewhat perturbed at the headline, was pleased at the winning and entered the donkey in another race. This time, it came in first. The next racing sheet carried the word: “Preacher’s Ass Out In Front”.

The Bishop was so upset with this kind of publicity that he ordered the preacher not to enter the donkey in another race. The new headline read: “Bishop Scratches Preacher’s Ass”.

This was too much for the Bishop, and he ordered the preacher to get rid of the animal. The preacher gave it to a Nun in the convent. The headline next day read: “Nun Has Best Ass in Town”.

The Bishop fainted when he read the news. When he came around, he told the Nun that she would have to dispose of the donkey. She finally found a farmer who would take it off her hands for \$10.00. The paper duly reported the transfer of ownership thus: “Nun Peddles Ass for Ten Bucks”.

They buried the Bishop next day.

TRI BERRESE

DISSE LIBRETTO ISE FOR DOSE U LAICHES TO FOLLOW
DI SPEECHER UTAL ISE SPICCHE DI TRI BERRESE

Uans appona taim uas tri berrese; mama berre, papa berre, e bebi berre. Live inna contri near foresta. Naise Aus. No mughegg. Uanna die papa, mama, e bebi go bice, onie fburghetta locche dorr.

Bai enna bai commese Goldilocchese, eci garra nattinghe to do butte meiche troble. Sci puscie olla fudde daune maute; no live eni. Den sci gos oppersterres enna slips in olle beddse.

Bai enna bai commese oame di tri berrese, olle sonnebrone enna sendi innse scius. Dei garra no fudde; no beddse. En uarra dei gone do to Goldilocchese? Tro erre auto inas striit? Colle pulissemant?

Dei uns Italien berrese, enne dei nominde dei slipps onna flor. Goldilocchese stei derre tri unicense; en guista bicose dei esche erre tu maiche di beddse sci sei; “go to elle,” enna runna oame to erre mama, tellernerre uata sanimabicesse di tri berrese uar.

Uatsiuse? ... Uarra iu gonnado? ... Go compleine sitolle?

Penned at the top of this were the words, “Keep this handy.”

Editor’s note: Uadya nos! Guessie lyecces dis uan abunche.

THE WITCH WHO OPENED THE TEA ROOM

Perhaps you have heard the story of the Witch who decided to go into business so she opened a Tea Room. She advertised it as the Witch's Tea Room.

She did very well and was making a good profit, but being a witch she was a bit tricky. She thought that she could increase her profit by using each tea bag twice. That seemed to work, so she began using each tea bag three or even four times.

In a fairly short time, her Tea Room lost its popularity, and the witch went out of business.

You probably caught the moral of the story? The witch had learned the hard way that: Honest Tea is the best Policy.

TO MISS ANN LANDERS

Dear Ann,

Could you advise me on the following problem?

I am 30 years old, and have two brothers. One of them is a Republican member of Congress in Washington D.C. The other is serving a nine year sentence for repeated rape. My two sisters are on the streets and my father is living on their earnings. My mother is pregnant by the next door neighbour, and he refuses to marry her.

Recently I met a charming girl, an ex prostitute, single and the mother of three lovely children – one white, one black, and one Chinese.

My problem is: Should I tell my girlfriend about my brother being a Republican?

Yours....

CRIMES OF CORRESPONDENCE

These few letters have been included not because they are particularly shining examples of his work (although the wry wit is never far away), but for the simple reason that they too provide some insight into things that were important to Kelly, and capture other aspects of his life.



CLIF AND BETTY'S ACCIDENT

Saturday morning, May 15, 1978:

Clif and Betty left Vancouver, planning to reach Lethbridge by Sunday night to visit a Nite cap friend. They stopped for the night at Christina Lake. Sunday morning around 8:00 a.m. Clif got out of bed and attempted to light the gas stove to put on the kettle. As soon as the match flared, there was an explosion. Clif was enveloped in flames. He could not get out of the sliding side door, so got out via the door on the driver's side and dove into the dirt.

He had his glasses on, so his eyes escaped damage, also his eyebrows. His hair in front is fused. His lips are not too bad. His face is all puffed. His hands, arms, front of his legs from knees up, the fronts of his feet, and his heels are all terribly burned. Diving into the dirt helped put out the flames. His burning pyjamas fell around his heels and feet. Diving into the dirt got dirt in all his burns. As a result they literally had to flay him to get the wounds clean.

Betty was in bed with a pillow over most of her head. As Clif leaped out, he yelled at Betty to get out. She managed to get out the side door (usually she has a hard time to open it). I guess Clif took most of the fire out with him. Some of the curtains in the van were burning. Betty beat them out with her pillow. Pieces of the burning curtain fell on her hands, inflicting burns. Her hair net burned almost completely away. A neighbour arrived with an extinguisher and put out the rest of the fire.

There was some mix-up in phoning for an ambulance. Clif lay on the ground for an hour. They tried to get him to roll onto a sleeping bag and they covered him, but he got very cold as you can imagine. The police arrived quickly. Betty and Clif were taken to Grand Forks hospital. They were not equipped to handle such serious burns so after some preliminary treatment they were taken 65 miles to Trail Region Hospital. They have excellent doctors and nurses who are well skilled in handling such cases. In that respect they are lucky.



The back window of the Van was blown completely out, but not broken. The windshield is discoloured and broken from the heat. The big side door is sprung out almost 2 inches top and bottom, and from half to three quarters of an inch at the rear. There are burn marks on the counter and floor near the stove. The section above the stove is fused, as is the section above the windshield. Two curtains are damaged. Some articles of clothing are ruined. Really the Van escaped remarkably well.

How did it happen? Until Clif can give a better account, we will not know. This is near as I can gather from what they have told us. They had used the stove at suppertime. When they went to bed they opened the top vent wide. (Otherwise they might not have awakened in the morning.) One story says that – just as he struck the match Clif realized that the valve was partially open, but it was too late for him to check his hand. Evidently the valve had been partially open all night. It is hard to understand why they did not smell the gas.

Dorothy phoned us around 1:00 p.m. Sunday. She and Ted had decided to go to Trail. They promised to phone us when they got there no matter how late it might be. She phoned around 1:00 a.m. Monday morning. It is around 400 miles. They had a rough trip; strange road, traffic, rain. We left as soon as we could get the Van ready, assemble the necessary finances etc. We spent Monday night at Osoyoos on Cliff Graham's lot.

Today on the way through, we stopped at Christina Lake. It took us a good part of an hour to locate the park and get their story. According to them the Police had taken the Van to Grand Forks. When we arrived in Trail at the Motel where Dorothy and Ted were staying, the Van was parked outside. Ted had got it and had the rear window replaced. Ted will probably drive the Van back to Vancouver when he goes. We were up to the hospital twice today. We are in a trailer park, staying another night at least. Betty may be out of the hospital soon.



It may be three weeks before they would risk moving Clif to another hospital. Then he should be flown. That is the story to 11:45 p.m.

Tuesday, May 18, 1976

THE TRIP SOUTH – NOVEMBER 1974

November 3: Up at 6:30 a.m. The phone rang in the midst of the last minute inspection at 7:55. It was Beryl wishing us bon voyage. We were on the way by 8:15 a.m. At the border I went into the Canadian Customs and reported the T.V., Radio, Sewing machine, typewriter, etc. to forestall any trouble on our return.

It was foggy enough to blot out the view of the countryside but not bad enough to make driving hazardous. We got lost in the fog in Bellingham when we tried to stop at a shopping centre. I turned off too soon. We got back onto the highway after wasting some time and saw the spot as we went sailing by. We stopped at a Motel "6" in Portland. The room cost only \$13.60 for the four of us. We dined in the Van. John shared the driving so we made 343 miles.

Monday 4: Foggy until noon, then sunny. Away about 9:20 a.m. We stopped at the Bazar in Medford (that is not an error. It is the name of the store.) We stopped at Motel "6" in Redding. 417.8 miles.

Tuesday 5: Lovely day. Hazy in the distance all day. Away about 9:10 a.m. Stopped for lunch by the river just north of Sacramento. Stopped for the night in a Motel "6" in Fresno. Called Chris and Howard Watkins on the phone. They came over to our room for a little visit. Howard was very involved in the election. The day's mileage was 340.

Wed; 6: Another lovely day. Hazy until we got into the San Gabriel mountains, then lovely and clear. Very little smog in L.A. Reached Burns Ave. about 3:30 p.m. Albert had his truck parked in front of their block to save a parking spot for the Van. We received the usual royal welcome from Rose and Albert. 227.7 miles. Phoned June and Earl Boyce. They were too involved to come over.



Thursday 7: The four of us off to Disneyland. It was a perfect day. We were disappointed to find that It's A Small World and also Tiki Room were both closed for renovations. We headed for home around 4:45 p.m. We were in very heavy traffic through the centre of the city but had no real problems. 63.9 miles for the round trip. Yuki and George Hyashi (the Japanese couple) came over in the evening. We phoned Healing Waters to say we would arrive Friday unless we received word that the home would not be ready.

Friday 8: Went grocery shopping, Rose acting as guide. Albert was on a job so we took Rose to the Mt. Sinai Hospital for an appointment with her doctor. While she was in the hospital we did some more shopping. It was about a 22 mile round trip.

Left for Desert Hot Springs around 12:30. Albert had to make a short call on the way so we waited for them at Griswolds. When they arrived we treated all of us to a big feed at the smorgasbord. The price has gone up to \$1.75 for all you can eat. Next stop was at Hadleys (the fruit and nut store). Reached Healing Waters about 4:00 p.m. The Bogdanoffs were away but Nellie told us the door was open and the key on the table. Wayne & Nellie had just closed the office and were standing outside. First visitors were Lil & Lawrence Lytle. They had just come out of the pools.

C-1 has been re-carpeted throughout with nice gold carpet. New faucets in the kitchen sink. New valve in the bathroom to stop the snoring John. New carpet on the outside doorstep. Much cleaner than last year. A different chesterfield, new drapes, quite pretty. Colourful cushions on the kitchen chairs, etc. The Frigidaire was not working properly until Manya fiddled with the control and said a little prayer. It seems O.K. now. The outlet fan above the range is also working. So we have much to be thankful for.



Yesterday, we went to Desert Hot Springs to pick up our box of belongings from the Millers. It has been nice meeting all of the old friends and hearing what they have been doing during the summer. Most of the regulars are returning or have already booked in. I have not yet tried my hand at croquet. Most of the regular players are hard at it.

John and I took a walk out to the cairn on the hill this morning. The large cairn has been knocked down. We will have to rebuild it by easy stages. We have just returned from a session in the pools. A couple of hours can pass very quickly in and around the pools. This time, John and I had the complete round: Sauna, steam room, shower, Jacuzzi, hot pool, cool pool, and swimming pool.

It is a truly lovely day. This morning the temperature on the patio was just around 80°. Now at 3:15, I am sitting in the house with the door wide open. The thermometer on the wall says 82°.

We are all going for a walk.

November 1974

CRIMES OF THE GRANDSON

I struggled with the decision to include these, in part because they have nothing to do with Kelly's work, and also because this book really stands on its own without any interference from me. In particular, the ending of the last story – a trip log – completes a wonderful circle with the cover photograph.

Nevertheless, here they are. I think I was finally swayed by the fact that I have been doing much the same thing as he did so many years ago, without ever realizing that he had. There was a sudden connection associated with that discovery, followed almost immediately by regret, then wonder.

There are a few surprising parallels, but for the most part, we were different people, writing in different times. I feel that his compositions had more social relevance somehow – they are more generalizable or reflective of an external observation, and presented with such a sparkling wit – whereas my own tend to be more personal, and probably a little too serious. Oh well, I'll leave the critiques for the critics.



THE CHALLENGER

Visions of yesterday,
And dreams lost along the way.
Hopes for tomorrow
Scattered through the clouds
One fateful day.
Memories of heroes, fire, and angels
Will haunt me always.

January 1986

*Written in after witnessing the explosion of the US Space Shuttle,
Challenger.*

FULL CIRCLE

The wheels go around on the black machines.
The dust rises high in the air.
The little men dream their thoughtless dreams,
And wonder who put them there.

The engines of destruction reign.
The skies weep on fields burned.
The little men holding up the flame
Can't forget what they have learned.

And they fight; invulnerable in their might.
Through the night; compassion lost to the light.
The world goes full circle.

The buildings fall, the poison flows,
The children die in the night.
Ever stronger the cold wind blows
With no little men left to fight.

No power alive can stop that force –
The cities crumble to dust.
The gods of darkness steer the course
Of the little betrayers of trust.

And they fight; paupers and princes tremble with fright.
Through the night; no longer a wrong or a right.
The world goes full circle.

And as night falls over sightless eyes
The moon rises, unobserved.
Little man wonders why he cries –
Did he get what he deserved?

The world goes full circle.

1987

I always imagined Rush playing this.

THOUGHTS & DREAMS

Alone in a darkened room at night,
Gazing through a windowpane.
The sky glows with the city's light
Reflected from the snow and rain.

Thoughts that wander far and wide.
Wind and trees that call your name.
A car passes softly by outside,
And sighs away as lonely as it came.

A while ago I tried to sleep
And calm my soul with happy lies,
But all these thoughts and dreams I keep
Fill my heart when I close my eyes.

Through the day my way is clear.
But all that changes when darkness falls.
I can't help wishing you were here;
Warmth to answer silent calls.

But I stare out through the night,
Looking for some meaning in my pain.
When the sun brings morning's light
Irresolution and I remain.

And so I watch the world weep
Snow and rain from morning skies.
Still, these thoughts and dreams I keep
Fill my heart when I close my eyes.

1987

THE GIFT

The world owes you naught
And yet, offers such treasures
In passing moments. A thought
In time for the pleasures
Of those with minds to see.

Such gifts have a cost
Of sorts. For each vision belayed
Countless more are irrevocably lost.
But in truth, a small price paid
For those with time to be.

1988

Inspired by a photo taken during a summer fishing trip to Minnehaha with Dad and Scott.

A SUMMER'S REQUIEM

Morning dawns cold under colourless skies
Shrouded in the mist
Of a world's last breath.

Time stands still; the sun will not rise
Not a day, not a night
This mise-en-scène of death.

Not a ripple belies the once frenzied profusion
So recently silenced
So utterly dead.

This is the end of the grand illusion
Dry eyes unmoving
Cold tears unshed.

1988

Inspired by another photograph, taken on the same trip – after a day without fish followed by a very cold, very rainy night without sleeping bags....

A STRANGER PLACE

Today is the first day of my life.
I have never been here. I have never felt this way.
I have never heard or seen what I hear and see now.
I turn...

...and the feeling is new.
Sights and sounds of people and places I have never known.
The light is different. Somehow nothing is the same as it was.
I turn...

...and there is a stranger in the mirror.
I have no knowledge of him, yet he moves with me.
Who looks through me with my own eyes?
I turn...

...and I find myself again in a stranger place than before.

1988

Inspired by “Patient M,” a man who suffered a brain injury and lost the ability to remember anything from one day to the next. He kept his “memory” in a box – a set of diaries which he kept faithfully and would read when he wanted to “remember” things.

A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM

I was standing in a place I knew; yet it wasn't quite the same.

I couldn't decide just what it was

When something called my name.

Then I beheld a terrible sight; a Beast, a thing undone!

My legs refused to move at all

And I knew I couldn't run.

A massive hand with bloodstained claws,

Cruel laughter rising higher.

Reflected in its evil eyes

My body, bathed in fire.

My heart, a lump within my throat,

Beating with my fear.

I couldn't move, I couldn't breath!

What am I doing here?...!

Suddenly I found myself

In a familiar place again.

An unforgettable rush of warmth

Surging through me when

I felt your arms around me

And saw your face above.

"It's just a dream," you whispered,

"Just a dream, my love."

How long it was I lay there,

I really don't recall.

But I felt your softer breathing,

Its gentle rise and fall,

So I moved a little closer,

No longer so alone.

My cheek upon your shoulder,

I matched your breathing with my own.

Something made me move again

And once again I woke

But to an empty room and aching heart.

Enough to make me choke

On the rage and the frustration.

I swallowed on a scream.

"It's just a dream," you whispered.

Just a dream within a dream.

MY EVERY WISH

I have seen a wonder that
I never hoped to look upon.
This sight has torn asunder that
Which I believed forever one.

Heart and mind, mind and heart,
Once in peaceful harmony,
Now are poised to tear apart
This careful balance inside of me.

Still, my heart! It is not wise
To give yourself without requisite.
But every thought I have belies
The truth of my whole-hearted plight.

Perhaps this truth is not all bad,
Though good is a rarity at best,
But even in longing I have had
A brief respite from my distress.

I once believed that thoughts and dreams
Being fleeting things, come seldom true.
But in the light of love it seems,
My every wish I've found in you.

1990

BEING RAIN

Oh, the cold, cold rain.
It seems without end this night.
Above, blacker than black, the clouds
Hold a new moon in their icy embrace.
The unseen stars wink knowingly.

The forgotten raindrops gather
In growing streams
Until they are swept away, somewhere.
A sorry end
For such selfless fellows as they.

Funny, the rain doesn't mind
Being rain.
Dashed carelessly on a bed of autumn leaves.
And the moon and clouds
Seem content in their intimacy.

Through a window, a single light.
A young man struggles to reconcile
Himself and his lot....
Funny, the rain doesn't mind
Being rain.

1988

QUIET HEART

It's a funny thing - life.
You can pass the days quietly;
no hint of trouble or strife
no worry of what can or cannot be,
and mistake this nothingness,
this lack of feeling at all
if you're not careful, for happiness.
Yes, who are they, to have the gall
to disturb your reverie with revelry?
Why, I'm not hurt or worse,
not frustrated or angry.

Ah, my friend, 'tis the curse
of emptiness that gnaws your soul.
And though it may escape your sight
it surely must take its toll
like any sickness, this heart's blight.

The question, as I see it then:
Is it better to avoid the pain of life,
like some cold stone 'till who knows when,
or take a chance with love's knife?
A twice-sharp blade, no doubt,
but perhaps a necessary part
of the game. For what can it be without
joy?

Oh, live and love, quiet heart.

1988

A PERFECT WORLD

A song I have begun to play

More often than I did yesterday,

Since it seems to inspire the appropriate level of pain.

An intense frustration, deeply hidden,

Should a perfect world come unbidden

To mind when such fantastic dreams are in vain.

An understatement of fact indeed

To say that I have seen my need

Walking, talking, breathing for just a day.

And in the blink of my opened eye

All I thought I knew went by

Without so much as a meaningful wink my way.

No doubt I'll pass your way once more

And become again what I abhor;

Laughing, crying, falling all the while

In love with a life I cannot live

Since nothing can I ever give.

Oh my heart! I can't forget your smile.

1989

TIME & TIDE

In a life of wind and waves,
Of stormy seas
And early graves,
It must be that a port-of-call
Is hard to find -
If there at all.

An illusion of a ship at rest
May suffice,
And may be best.
But those who make the time to dock
Are oft' surprised
With where they walk.

Now, a sailor may prefer by far
To trust to cloth
And mast and spar.
To stand and feel the ocean's spray
Is part of life,
Truth to say.

But to drift at whim of time and tide
For sake of spite
Or misplaced pride,
Is to risk the long and lonely reach
Of hurtful rocks
Or empty beach.

So drop anchor and rest a while.
Take the chance
To show a smile.
For even if your ship sails late,
I know of one
Who'll stand and wait.

1989

WORDS IN EDGEWISE

Dearest Stranger,

If you can't perceive it, you won't believe it;
This twisted line of thought.
But I think I'll chance it – if not romance it –
And explain just what you've wrought.

I Wonder,

Does it surprise you? Or, do you despise too
Such cryptic presentations?
I have this fear. But to make things clear
Escapes my orchestrations.

You See,

There may be things that my attention brings,
Of value to the easy-to-please.
But to one like you? What can I do,
Given my deficiencies?

I Know

There is no future in trying to suit your
Wants, your needs, your dreams.
Be it masochist, or just pessimist,
I don't mind that much, it seems.

But,

I'm sorry to say that come what may,
I'll make a cut or a jibe.
Please understand: It is quite unplanned;
Just to salvage my misplaced pride.

So,

It's just a ruse, and please excuse
Me if I call you "tease" my dear.
The unfortunate perception without exception
Of a remarkable woman, I fear.

I

Hear you laughing as you say (in a game you often play)
"Me? Remarkable? Har Har."
Well, I'm willing to bet I'll never let you forget
That you are, you are, you are!

1989

Read vertically for a typical conversation....

...AND WHAT COST, YOUR PRIDE?

The question of the moment is
not what you hope to gain,
Or just exactly how you got
to be so very vain.

The question of importance is
not of what you fantasize,
Or how you sleep at night
living such a life of lies.

The question of most interest is
not my place in your schemes
Or how the trail of injured feelings
eludes your eye, it seems.

The question I would like to ask is
not of the secrets that you hide,
But how you found perfection,
and what cost, your pride?

1989

MAYBE NOT

...And then, after several ill-advised
And half-hearted attempts
Our hero returns
To the quiet place within himself.
He rediscovers the easy flow of solitude;
The understanding comfort of
His own shoulder when he despairs.
He almost made it, you know.
But there was this one
Who sort of took him by surprise....

...No really! He wasn't giving much thought
To anything other than getting by.
But in the process he got caught.
Well, maybe not caught—just his eye.

Anyway, what was it? One month? Two?
Whatever. Eventually, it became plain
That this was no phase he was going through.
Oh no! This was worse. He had girl-brain.

No mistake. We're talking a serious development.
I mean, what was he supposed to do?
On top of contemplating his unemployment
He had several thousand assignments due.

Did I say "had?" Actually, it's "has." And he's me.
Or I'm he. 'Tis myself of whom I speak.
So enough of this "to be or not to be"
Crap. There's work to do. Tune in next week....

...When you'll hear the enemy's story:
"Excuse me, but are you busy today?"
"Um, actually yes. As a matter of fact, I am. Sorry."
Well, maybe Tuesday will be my good news day.

Maybe not.

WIND

To drive a chill with springtime rain
To sculpt a field of summer grain
To soar above the autumn clouds
To drift through winter's snowy shrouds

To billow sails along my path
To rend and tear in heedless wrath
To carry countless winged flocks
To dash cold waves on lifeless rocks

To caress your skin and touch your hair
To smooth away your every care
To whisper softly in your ear
To fill a laugh or dry a tear.

To be looked upon and never seen
To be, without having ever been
To, in passing, both live and die
Very like the wind am I.

1990

MY BROTHER

He is a dynamic figure, often seen scaling walls and crushing ice. He can pilot kayaks down severe inclines with unflagging speed, and he cooks ten-minute macaroni in five minutes. If he had a dime for every chin-up he's done, his income tax for 1994 would pay off the national debt. He has been known to remodel train stations on his lunch breaks, making them more efficient in the area of heat retention. Critics world-wide swoon over his original line of corduroy evening wear. He is an expert in stucco, a veteran in love, and an outlaw in Peru.

Occasionally, he treads water for three days in a row.

Using only a hoe and a large glass of water, he once single-handedly defended a small village near Fort Frances from a horde of ferocious army ants. He plays bluegrass cello, he was scouted by the Mets, and he is the subject of numerous CBC documentaries. When he's bored, he builds large suspension bridges in the yard. He has been a spy for the CIA, an agent for the FBI, and a clerk at IGA. He doesn't perspire. Last summer, he toured Manitoba with a travelling big-bang demonstration. He has been a consultant for NASA, a bodyguard for the Queen, and an editor for the Bulletin.

Children trust him.

He can hurl Frisbees at small moving objects with deadly accuracy. He knows the exact location of every food item in the grocery store. He sleeps once a week; when he does sleep, he sleeps in a chair. While on vacation in Southern Ontario, he successfully negotiated with a group of terrorists who had seized a small bakery.

The laws of physics do not apply to him.

He balances, he weaves, he dodges and frolics, and his bills are all paid. Years ago he discovered the meaning of life but forgot to write it down. He has made extraordinary four course meals using only a microwave and ketchup. He has won bullfights in San Juan, cliff-diving competitions in Sri Lanka, and spelling bees at the Kremlin.



He has played Hamlet at Stratford, hosted George Burns' birthday on national TV, and spoken with Elvis in Hudson.

He's my brother, he's a heck of a guy, and now, he's married.

August 19, 1995

Speech for Scott and Laura at their wedding reception.

SLUR NEAT BEEF OUR CRYPTS MESS

Does slur neat beef our Crypts mess, a gnarled Tudor horse,
Nod accretion vat storing; knot ivy and Morse.
Thus talking swear rung bite a chimp knee wick hair,
Inn hoax rats Aunt Nickel has swoon rugby dare.

Dusk chilly wren worn tussled else noggin thorn breads,
Why lesions off shirk her bums dunce India reds.
Enema inner cur chef, an eye enemy crap,
Add guts settler done flower lawn went hurt snap.

Once futon sell yarn theory rose satchel clutter
High spam fried am bet tootsie wet whiz he mutter.
A weigh toothy winder oaf lieu whittle clash,
Toe roping dash utter ant rue yap sees hash.

Saloon honour pest oaf a few pollens know
Gravel ulcer off midway toward checks bell hoe.
Wan swat tummy wintering ice shut a pour,
Buttocks my nature slake, inundate tinny roan door!

Withal it'll hauled river, solar verse sand kick,
In yew England ointment litmus bees Antic.
Mow rabies and seagulls hiss cousin say cane
Auntie whiz elk, unshirted, ankle phlegm insane:

“Nod, Asher! Nod Answer! Nope, Rants errant Nixon!
Oink, Owl met! Oink, Stupid! Oink on her armpit Son!
Toothy topple ape arch, toothy topple see war!
Nod has hooray! Has hooray! Has hooray oar!”

Has try heave slat beef our see isle dreary came fry,
Went hay me twist and knob speckle, mound tooth he's cry,
Sew are pawn see horse tap see cousins say glue,
Wicker slay follow twice, ends Aunt Nickel has true.

Ant hen innate wrinkling, aye hoard ornery woof
Tap rant sing in pause Inco beach ladle huff.
Has eye drawing may yet, untwist stern inn or owned,
Dune thatch in me Aunt Nickel has commit hay boned!



Haywire trussed din awl for, for miss hat toe is putt,
Ant hiss cloves swear auburn nest wick hashy sand slut.
A bend all off twice eel adds lung honest bark,
Auntie luke dike ape head largess no pawning hiss park.

Hiss ice, howdy wrinkled! Hiss dim please home heir he!
Hiss chucks whirl hike hoses, hiss snows lie catch airy.
Hiss stroll ladle moot waste ran supple ice elbow,
Under board honest gin vase has wait has he's know.

Thus tempo ape eye pee hell tie tennis teed,
Enders mocha in slur called hiss headlight all reed.
Eel adds aboard foist, anti ladle Rome deli,
Thatch hook run eel halved, lie cable furlow galley.

You watch hubby end pump, all night holly hold health.
End isle halved we nigh sewing, hens pickle mice wealth.
Ass swank office high end out wits office hat
Swoon grave meter no triad noting toe drat.

Hasp oak not he wart, bet want street toe hiss mark,
Ant filed oldies talkings, think earned wife age ark.
Antler ringer fang her astride office snows,
Angling venus node, happily chimp knee heroes!

Hasp rang toe hiss lay, toe hiss steam gravel missile,
Anyway there elf lewd, lichen dune offal tinsel.
Bud eye hoard timex lame ash head rove how to sheet,
“Mare he Crypts mess toward, untoward, hay gut neat!”

Bobble Yam sun – Deans ember 25, 1995

BREATHLESS!

It's not fair!
The way I have to fight for air,
Just because you put the rest to shame.
A minute ago
I (and everyone else I know)
Was breathing fine. Then through the door you came.

OK, OK!
I'll admit that come what may
There may be others that please the eye to see.
A pretty face
One undoubtedly may replace.
But no one I know has your personality....

Oh, it's true
That's a not-so-subtle insult to
Patsy Plain, but lady, you've got it all!
Those eyes, those ears!
And everything you do endears
You more and more to those who come to call.

Ring! Ring!
Rats! (I think that's someone calling.)
But if you have just one more minute for me,
Well, I guess
Even several minutes is somewhat less
Than required. It could take half an eternity....

But hey!
I only realised today
That I've been breathless since I don't know when.
No surprise,
But it takes time to acclimatise.
In a year or two, I'll start to breathe again!

1990

THE GENEALOGIST'S CREDO

The ancient lives beneath your roots
May nourish more than healthy shoots,

But though warts and weeds discomfit thee,
Thou shalt not prune the family tree!

1997

TOMORROW BOY

Tiny A.J., little A.J. try to sleep.
Don't let Mommy hear you make one little peep.
Now it's time to close your eyes, and drift away.
Until you wake tomorrow, for another day.

Tiny A.J., little A.J. bright-eyed boy.
Always full of questions, you're my pride and joy.
Daddy, how far is tomorrow? Will it soon be here?
It's not so far, my little man, and Daddy's near.

Tiny A.J., little A.J. sleepy one.
Dreaming all your little dreams of summer sun.
And with every quiet breath, and baby sigh,
You fill my heart with wonder while the world goes by.

Tiny A.J., Alan John say you'll be mine.
Daddy wants to show you all that's good and fine.
And your Mommy loves you. Do you know? I'm sure you will.
Sleep tonight, tomorrow will be better still.

1997

TO PROGENY

Move your daily mountains all unaware,
Taking for granted a fantastic kind of commonplace.
A house of cards where collapse is constant, and expected. Ubiquitous
complexity beneath layers of domesticity.

Their millennium becomes my generation, becomes your day.
The pace quickens; unmanageable but safely ignored.
Meanings blur when awareness implies ignorance.
Quantum mechanics for social evolution.

Becomes their instant. The world is not the same as it was
The last time I looked, and I am always looking.
We have watched it all unfold together without meeting.
If only you could see what I have seen with your eyes.

Becomes our continuity. Change is, and becomes itself.
Individuality is collective; a defining, common characteristic.
The system itself is human. I am you, though you are not, yet.
We do not have lives, but life. Our life. Their legacy.

Your turn.

1998

FORTUNE TELLER

My vision of your Earth from here
Is a most peculiar sight.
Its wondrous complexity I fear
Takes you beyond my light.

I so much want for you to be
All that I dreamt and more.
And yet, I prefer you near to me
On my shoulders. Duck! A door.

In such ways I see your trust fulfilled,
And still keep the bit I must.
But to what avail is my ducking skill
When I am long to dust?

Now, *Footprints* is a purportedly wise
Tale of His care for your lot.
But to me, single prints just symbolize
A brief period of rational thought.

In truth, if when your legs are sore
You expect another's tread,
Don't think that He or I could do more
Than walk in circles and pat your head.

I think that I can help you best
If I focus on the hows
And leave the whats and wheres to rest,
'Til such time as suits your nows.

Our languages will be different, so
Though we use like words to talk,
I'll never tell you where to go.
Instead, I'll show you how to walk.

I'll show you through your hurts and cries,
With a laughing, loving care.
For when I look into your eyes,
I see the future written there.

1999

A BUG'S LIFE

As I was stepping out one day
A tiny insect flew my way.
Naturally I brushed aside
The little bug, regained my stride
And without a moment's care
Continued walking unaware
Of any undue trouble that
My passing caused the little gnat.

But all unbeknownst to me
This was no ordinary flea
And so it wasn't long before
He regained his wing once more
And started at me from behind
To give a piece of his tiny mind.
(Had I but known the crafty nit,
I might have been prepared a bit.)

So you may imagine my surprise
When, flying 'round between my eyes
And perching up upon my nose,
He started in unbroken prose
To educate me on the ways
We humans seem to fill our days
Finding methods foul and fell
To make bugs' lives a living hell.

I could not get in a single word
To voice the irony most absurd
That his diatribe should bring
Before he started in to sting!
“Away with you, you wingèd cuss!”
I sputtered and with prodigious fuss
Dislodged the little beggar from
The soapbox my nose had become.



I swung, he swooped, we thrashed about
He'd zip in, I'd chase him out.
And he continued all the while
Enumerating we human's vile
Insecticidal tendencies, then
He'd zigzag in to bite again
And when I danced out of his reach,
The damned thing went on with his speech!

I had almost given up the fight,
When at last I chanced to grab the mite!
I held him high above my head
And shouted, "Gotcha! You're SO dead!"
Oh, I was about to finish him,
But then I came upon the whim
To explain a thing or three
To that opinionated bee.

And, seeing reason, (I supposed)
The bug-eyed diplomat proposed
Bilateral solutions to
Our species' frequent rendezvous.
Well I could hardly disagree
With an olive branch from such as he
And so we searched around a bit
For a quiet spot where we could sit.

And, as hard as this may be to credit
The critter and I began to edit
A treaty between man and fly!
I got to know the little guy,
And by and by I came to see
How man and bug could one day be
Peaceful neighbours albeit not
Quite friendly with each other's lot.



Hours passed and we progressed
Further than I would have guessed
And before we knew it we had found
The basis for some common ground.
When the yardarm had been breached
Agreement in principle was reached.
My little friend he smiled at me,
And we flew and stood, respectively.

But then, just as I reached down to sign
My name upon the dotted line,
He landed suddenly and began
Nit-picking our agreed-to plan!
He wanted crops and lawns with weeds!
He spoke at length of insect needs.
On he went with this and that...
And so I up and squashed him flat.



And so ends the tale of my
Encounter with Jonathan Livingston Fly.
A little bug of too much wit
But careless still, in spite of it.
For me the moral of the story was
“Don’t trust a fly that doesn’t buzz.”
For him, I guess that it would be,
“Never land where they can see.”

August 1999

DIGITAL RECIDIVISM

A few additions from my post-millennium files.



A DEPTH OF LIGHT

The sun is coming up
All confidence and bright assurances.
The birds know all about it,
But when it comes to keeping secrets
They are failing shamelessly, I hear.

Spring drifts through my open windows,
Though the shades are drawn.
The conflated awakenings stir me
After the long, cold dark,
Even without the fast of sleep.

Eyes closed, I am watching a fool, watching.
This is too good to miss.
And what else would I do? Look?
The joke is not in the observation,
But that we think we see it at all.

The world colours, the pageant grows,
And the substance is so easily overwhelmed.
There is such tempting innocence in the rush of it.
Ignorant bliss, to be sated by a glance,
But no part of me would be so mindlessly smitten.

For while morning unfolds in an age-old rerun
To a fragrant symphony of beguiling chaos,
Experience presages each note
And so mourns its passing in synchronicity,
Soaring and falling in bittersweet harmony.

My view from this intimate distance
Is more profound than that, however:
A depth of light that reveals artistry and favour
Far beyond the pedantry of reflection;
Dazzling out of proportion with sense.

Let time fly or stop,
Exchange remembrance for anticipation,
And I would be no less certain.
Oh, I may break my heart to hold it all,
Or dream on and find the same perfection.



I know without looking,
A beauty of this transcendent nature.
Not just sparkling on the surface,
But aglow with burgeoning promise.
I can feel it in my mind. Dawning.

2010

STU P. IDITY

Inspired, I'm tired, by the error prone
That we laugh at from afar.
Weak mind, we find, when we're All A. Lone
(so it's a Luck E. Ting we are).

It's true, no clue, how they'd get by
Way down there below the bar
If we couldn't be here to Ed I. Fy
(lo, it's a Luck E. Ting we are).

Say spy that guy with the Gucci teeth
They go well with his brown cigar.
We spot the rot from Unde R. Neath
(whoa, it's a Luck E. Ting we are).

That fool will drool in his 12-year-old scotch
At the sight of a six-figure car.
Not quite as bright as his Role X. Watch
(doh, it's a Luck E. Ting we are).

Cheap trick, his chick in a 38-D
With the depth of a surgical scar,
Lays bare the unaware Stu P. Idity
(ho! it's a Luck E. Ting we are).

You knew those two would last a day.
While the paparazzi spar,
They pretend the end is Miles A. Way
(no, it's a Luck E. Ting we are).

No joke, some folk see no affect,
Just chase that pill-gotten star.
Oh well, what the hell, nobody's Per F. Ect—
(though it's a Luck E. Ting we are).

Yes, I guess we are, we are
And it's a Luck E. Ting we are.
No shit, sure's spit, we are, we are
(yo, it's a Luck E. Ting we are).

FREE TIME

Time lies to me, in three-faced double-talk
As I lay mindful, wandering sleeplessly,
Nagging with his heavy-handed clock
That ticks off age and taunts with yet-to-be.

“Things always turn out well,” Tomorrow prays
In such trite mouthings even she ignores
While old Past mumbles, wrapped within in his ways
And inane Now spins, counting triple scores.

Past awakes in mid-tale, told again
Far too many times for Now to care.
Tomorrow waits as Past remembers when,
But Now runs, fleeting here and there.

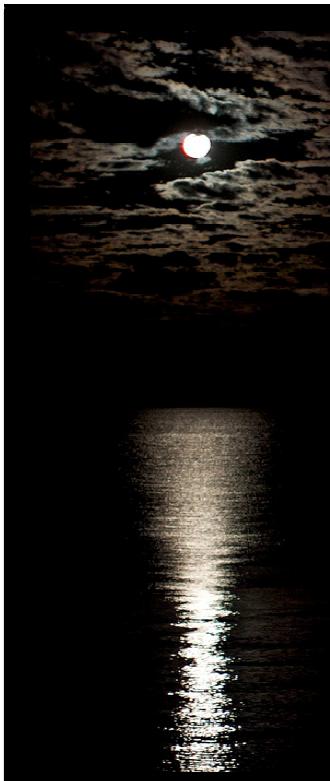
“You’ll regret this,” Past croaks. “Use your eyes!”
Turn around, old fool, the path’s ahead.
Now begs for more; Tomorrow sighs,
“Sleep you silly child, you’re late for bed.”

Forgotten in the night, Now turns in dreams.
Emboldened Past flies, confident and strange.
Tomorrow stirs, almost at hand it seems.
Each marionette that Time holds, bound in change.

But I know you, Time, and though I may be caught,
I live and love if I mark thee, or not.

2011

DARKER WATER



The nightlife is different here;
A rustle of leaves or soft murmuring.
The quiet cacophony
Of a world seldom seen
And rarely looked for.

Passions as basic, shared.
Intoxicated by the ichor of passing time,
Throbbing to the rhythm
Of fertile urgency
As potent as it is elusive.

Singular victories unmarked
But as remedies against aggregate failure.
An Earthly background radiation
Of spawn and quietus fulfilled.
Lacking all fear but as desperate.

Darker water flows under the rising moon.
Its silver light untouched by obsidian waves.
Nothing sleeps in the sleeping darkness.
Just as we see with sightless eyes,
Hear the silence of this night.

Darker water flows.

1988

I THINK, I THINK

I have a funny feeling. Something lurks within my head.
A sense of deep thoughts simmering, just waiting to be said.
I know only fools and politicians would claim a truly novel thought.
It's an ignorant presumption—so I'm afraid that's what I've got.

This concerns me mightily, for I know I'm not the latter.
Think about it. I'm forgetting someone. I can't be the matter.
Although I suppose it's possible that as deep as these thoughts are,
My dip-stick comes up empty because it doesn't dip that far.

Hmmm. Now that's a poser. A sure-'nough paradox.
Can one detect an argyle thought while porting bargoons socks?
I must be on the right track though. A conundrum's a sure sign
Of inspirations worth untangling—be they Earthly or Divine.

I generally assume the former. But there's a great example
Of an idea that's been had before and plumbed by dip-sticks ample:
Descartes discoursed for pages with exacting logic penned
To deduce Almighty certainty, only to blow it at the end.

"An idea greater than oneself," he said, "must come from a greater Being."
But was the notion really all that great, or just induced by lesser seeing?
"Imperfect man can't perfect a thing, so it must come from On High."
That his logic was included didn't dawn on the poor guy.

I'm not sure why he missed it. S'pose he bragged himself to sleep.
But if proof requires a leap of faith, it is merely proof of leap.
Perfection is quite relative. And here's the gist of it:
Your ideal is itself constrained by your own imperfect wit.

So, I can't dip deeper than myself, but I think I can think I can....
This is giving me a headache. I think I need a simpler plan.
Perhaps this nagging sense of mine, like ripples on the sea,
Isn't something I can grasp so much as something I will be.

For if we see the world as we are instead of as it is,
We mustn't see ourselves at all. We just think, therefore we is.
Could it be that simple in the end: *Cogito ergo sum?*
Nah!

My dip-stick must approximate. My think-tank's still got room.

BITE ME

I've an almost perfect set of teeth, much to my periodontist's grief.
He's a friendly but frustrated denterist, who's in (I suspect) conflict of interest.

He once told me at his place, manicured smile in straightest face,
That I'd spend less time in the chair by quadrupling my appointments there.

I dared not risk much controversy while utterly at his tilted mercy.
My pearly whites in balance hung, so we both just held my tongue.

His guidance then concerning floss left me at a total loss:
The hygienists wouldn't tire the same, if I did the work before I came.

He gave each tooth a forlorn pick, hoping that he'd missed a trick.
"But, ich I gid zhat gnyeshelf," I said, "I might as well stay home instead."

I tried to grin with humble pride (his hands were in my open wide).
He groaned and said, "You're right, it's true. I'll never make a dime off you."

Since he gave up, we get along. He never tells me where I wrong.
He knows I'm just a scale gig, but dad gum! His scales are big!

2013

True story.

HEADS UP

The road this morning is full of children playing old classics with a stimulating twist.
Like a trip down memory lane to a faintly seedy-looking arcade filled with flashing lights.
Their parents still wouldn't like the look of it, but they deposit coins and grip the controls,
Then accelerate to terminal velocity and avert their eyes.

Outside it's sunny.

The denizens here drive x-box-style these days (one-handed to keep their finger free).
Leather for vinyl, bling for string, plastic for plastic, and lead heels for red wheels.
They fly into rages over two-car gaps because someone else might beat their high score.
A half million VIPs connect simultaneously, each one a priority personified.

Time is money.

The CFO runs on nicotine and ego, and deprecates sleep with eyeshadow, or foreshadow,
Putting on her face while talking to Susan about John and sipping Tim's.
Blowing smoke, she changes lanes two at a time in her quixotic quest for the fast one.
She's pissed because she has another call, and her two-year-old is late for daycare.

His nose is runny.

The doctor risks the same artery each morning using four-wheeled surgical tools.
He scans the morning paper while swearing about the radio sportscast of other games
And checks the charge in his Blackberry while drafting behind a minivan doing only 142.
He's pissed because he just had to use his send-thumb to adjust the cruise control.

B L8 Honey :(

Almost, it's the same game of losers whose daily victory earns nothing more than a replay.
But the queen and her elk are worn thin, and eventually there is no quarter to be given.
Metal and glass occupy the same space, leaving none for arrogance, or innocence.
The brightly polished cabinets are also hauntingly familiar when they're horizontal.

People are funny.

2006

STRANGE LUCK

Tom said,

“I found a penny coming up the walk!”

James said, “Strange, and did it talk?”

Alan said, “That belongs to others!”

The penny said, “Sheesh! What silly brothers.”

Tom said, “OMG, it spoke!”

James said, “I meant that as a joke!”

Alan said, “Wait, I think that’s mine!”

The penny said, “Guys. Relax. It’s fine.”

“I didn’t mean to cause a fuss.

I rolled because I missed the bus.”

2014

Overheard one afternoon after school.

OUT AND OUT

A little house
at the top of a hill in suburbia
has a garden in the front
placed there to break up the barcode
of paved driveways and mowed lawns
and thwart every attempt
to play anything straight.

The diva of that garden
is a sunburst locust that,
with the rest of the family,
likes to sleep in
while the neighbourhood
rushes to dress in the newest spring lines.

She takes her time,
breezing onto the green carpet
in stunning yellow that catches every eye,
most of which belong to aphids, in her case.
They swarm the opening,
sucking their way into a parasitic metaphor
from cellulose to celluloid
in fifteen minutes of infamy.

But before the star takes the stage
and dominates the coverage
an understudy in the understory
has a moment in the sun.

What was once a modest intention
now just a single accidental upstart
heaped with demands for gratification
in inverse proportion to proliferation;
watched intently for days
after being ignored for years
and meeting neglect and regard
with an equanimity bordering on weediness.



That single flower bloomed yesterday,
on the first blue-sky day in May
after weeks of rain and wind
surrounded by more flashy bulbs and
a thousand other ticky-tacky boxes,
at the edge of a rebellious curve
at the top of a very square hill,
and fell flat on its face.

I'm looking at it now,
face-down in the mulch
glowing earnestly in the pouring rain,
and I am forced to report that
my outsized expectations for quiet joy
pinned on that brilliant little thing
(which waves a reassuring leaf at me now and then)
have been exceeded by audible laughter.

2017

LEFT FIELD, LANDED HERE

Should probably be sleeping. Cain't!
Would think that it's upkeep. Ain't!
Could consider medication. Won't!
Wood-knocking dedication. Don't!

Drives me crazy when I'm talking. Nya!
Strives to change me in mid walking. Aha!
Thrives on sudden random bear song. Cool!
Survives by leaving my thin hair long. Fool!

Might wonder where this comes from. Well!
Flight round a tender eardrum? Hell!
Bright flash out my left eyeball. Pow!
Slight gash in finished drywall. Wow!

Some callosum integration. Zip!
From intense unconcentration. Drip!
Come a powerful force of wit. Huh!
Dumb now I think of it. Duh!

Akin to painful bowel movement. Snap!
Thin chance of self improvement. Crap!
Spin the time I'm sore bereft of. Going!
In the field that I am left of. Boing!

2005

THE JEST MEDICINE

Antibiotic resistance results from persistence
In medical practice, not bugs.
Our clinics retain them, feed them, and train them
With every last one of our drugs.

Doctors know what I mean but they'll never come clean,
Prescriptions the crux of their station.
So common diseases from bug bites or sneezes,
Now kill, with the right education.

With swollen egos, they doled out placebos,
Prescribing four cocktails a day.
The stuff we were drinking was all wishful thinking,
But the profit was healthy that way.



If you are ailing, consider availing
Yourself of a shaman or voodoo.
Though you'll still be unwell, the alternative's hell.
To wit: In-patients die more than you do.

You might ask me why I am institute-shy
Where "sterile" is what they propound.
There's no real quandary. Staff, tools and laundry
Refine it then spread it around.

After all, have you heard even one single word
Of a "savage" with MRSA?
Sanitation neglected, they're never infected
Because you don't catch it that way.



No, the ironic place where the whole human race
Lines up to catch deadly bacteria
Is where greeblies thrive *before* victims arrive.
It's the only way they can get near ya.

So jab me, stab me, try to rehab me
The science is not what I doubt.
I'll take good care, just don't do it there.
I would much rather stay out.

Go through the motions of mixing the potions,
Do the whole hand-washing shtick.
But want to enlighten me? You merely frighten me.
Hospitals make people sick.

WHERE WHISPERS CARRY

We have this lakeside view of life
And watch it flow like time and care,
Washing away both joys and strife
Or skipping stones like memories there.

The surface shows when touched a wake
But more waves curl beneath unseen,
Caressing hearts designed to break
And lighting minds with what has been.

Warm sun over cool perspective
That buoys old burdens and softens too
Such hindsight overly reflective
Of all the things we thought we knew.

With love I think about my dad
Throwing rocks at a lily pad.

Our laughter splashing on a shore
Profound in shallows. Sharing all.
Unspoken dreams heard over the roar
Of worldly need. We played to fall.

And oh! What wealth! What good we've known,
There by our lake, no more to be.
But I remember skipping stones;
I close my eyes and I can see.

And every ripple draws a tear.
And every cloudless moonlit night,
Where silence echoes calm and clear
With sweet perfection, reflects his light.

No surprise the dreamers tarry
In the place where whispers carry.

2009

For my dad.



About the author

John Clarence "Kelly" Williamson was born in Archibald, Manitoba in 1903. He grew up in the small farming community of La Riviere, and attended Normal School (Teachers' College) in Manitoba in 1920. He married his wife Irene in Clandeboye in 1929.

He served in the RCAF reserves as a bombing instructor during World War II, and shortly after the War moved his family to Fort Frances, Ontario. On his retirement from teaching in 1968, he boasted 47 years of service without a single absence except for war service and education.

Kelly and Irene spent their retirement traveling in Canada and the United States. After his death in 1981, Irene treasured his writings, and shared them with us in the summer of 1999. I had originally hoped to surprise her with this book, but she passed away only a month later.

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